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FLIRTS AND FLIRTS;

OR,

A SEASON AT RYDE.

“ Life is but a Rotundorum,
We care nothing how it goes ;
Let them prate about decorum,
Who have characters to lose.”

OLD GIPSY SONG.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1868.



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FLIRTS AND FLIRTS.

CHAPTER I.

RYDE PIER.—INTRODUCTORY.

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HAVE you ever lived on Ryde Pier, kindly reader? is it yet to you as much unknown as any part of Fairyland, or are you, perchance, an old habitué who have there got by heart a thousand sweet little extravagancies in ladies' toilettes, taken honours in that interesting study of ankles, nowhere else half so diligently pursued, and are already partly hardened to the great excitement attending any pretty novelty's first advent on those oft trod boards? Yet if so, you know, none better, that nowhere else do you feel half

so much at your ease, and that, indeed, compared with the carelessly happy creature you find yourself there, in other places you may be said to feel like a fish out of water, or that hapless creature, the engaged man, not indeed, at that despairing moment, when he stands waiting before the altar—a lamb ready for the sacrifice—but at those less awful, yet very trying times, when he makes his appearance in society by the side of his fair fiancée, after formal consent has been given to his being made “the happiest of men.” But whichever is the case, whether for the novelty of the thing, or for old custom’s sake, come with me to Ryde Pier.

It is Saturday, the most crowded day in the week; the Marines have not yet quarrelled with the Pier company, and their band is playing merrily as ever, and all Ryde season is gathered on the pier to listen to it. For it is late in July, when Ryde is already full of pleasure-

seekers, and we are late comers, you and I. There, look at that girl, who is she? Oh, that's Miss Zieri; you may well look at her, for everyone's talking about her. Were such wonderful *bottines* ever seen before, and how many inches high are her heels, I wonder. But then, what an exquisite Greek profile! Hair of the fashionable colour of course, how on earth is it done? Petticoats slightly below her knees, and a waist you could easily clasp round. What a coquette she looks, as she skips along on her high heels, chattering in foreign English to those two tall men, each in fits of laughter! That is the way with Miss Zieri's admirers, they are always laughing. But now if you can tear your eyes away, look at some one else; ah! that is Miss Smith. No, her father does not keep a yacht, though she is rigged out in the regular yachting style; but young ladies who yacht don't generally wear such a cloud of golden hair floating down their backs. Nor has she any connexion

with the Navy, though her cuffs are all correct. But trust Morgan for that. She comes from the middle of the Island, and has never been known to go further than Ryde Pier; nor has she many acquaintances there, still it's a fine thing to walk up and down and be looked at. There, is not that a get up! white lace over mauve silk, the white lace cape barely concealing the snowy neck, and the tiniest of bonnets, just three trails of ivy, lightly resting on the dark shining hair. That's Mrs. Courteney from Southsea, and that lady-killer beside her is Major O'Connor. Not a very handsome man certainly, but a dangerous, despite the stiff red hair, and the short bristly moustache and whiskers that so stubbornly refuse to curl gracefully. Look at his smile as he bends over her, holding on his chimney-pot the while by the hook of his walking-stick, for the west wind is blowing pretty freshly.

But, stay, now we have once got clear of that block round the band, where Miss

Zieri's short petticoats are so much valued by the men who walk behind her, do not try to examine all those interesting persons, who care not to mingle with the walkers, but peacock it at their ease on their benches, laughing at you and the other promenaders, and don't consider themselves any part of the show. Come and lean over the end of the pier, and admire the beauties of Nature. Is not Ryde beautifully situated with its innumerable pretty little villas sloping down to the water's edge—it is high tide now. But you are not listening to me; I see your excuse, and forgive you, for you are wrapt up in admiration of one of the beauties of Ryde. We can boast of nothing fairer than that beautiful creature sitting half way down one of the flights of steps leading from the pier to the water's edge—the one that we happen to be looking over at the top of. She is the beauty of the season—glorious, golden-haired Kathleen O'Grady. How merrily her musical laugh-

ter gushes forth, as she talks to those two young men sitting at her feet ; but something makes her look up, and at once she sees and recognizes a pale delicate-looking girl in black, whom we have not noticed, though she is standing not far from us, looking down, too, just now at that merry trio on the steps. "Sybil," cried Kathleen, and beckoned so that she could not choose but go to her, yet without moving herself ; the next moment she was embracing and kissing her, regardless of spectators. Regardless ! nay, nothing that Kathleen did, was ever done regardless of spectators, and even while she kissed her, she probably thought to herself what the man at her feet would give for one of those kisses. "Dear Sybil, I must take you to mother. She will be so glad to see you. Now, Mr. De Veux, do you know you are sitting on my dress ?"

He was not ; but he thought he was, and, though looking delighted, professed penitence, and Kathleen laughed her

merry gurgling laugh. It was one of her greatest charms, this laugh, and the Ryde people tried to vote it bad style, after they had once got over the first delicious surprise of it. But she was the Honourable Kathleen O'Grady, so it wasn't much use ; they might smile contemptuously at Miss Zieri, and pooh pooh Miss Smith, and purse up their lips and look grave when Mrs. Courteney was mentioned. But there was nothing doubtful about Kathleen's antecedents ; for her birth and parentage you might consult the Peerage—it was all written there in black and white—there was no difficulty too in knowing how she had been brought out in London the season before last, how her season had been curtailed by her father's illness, how they had gone for the winter to Rome, where for a month she had made a *furor*. Then her father had died, and she and her mother, Lady Killowen, were now in Ryde for a little change, and “to cheer dear mother up a little ;” so Kath-

leen said, and for a moment the brilliant happiness faded out of her face, and allowed full force to the sad dreamy expression of her large grey-blue eyes; generally this was so much lost in the brightness of her beamy smiles, blooming cheeks, and gleaming hair, that few even of those who knew her best, knew that she had sorrowful eyes, and yet they added greatly to her charms. They saved her from ever seeming hard and unsympathetic in the riches of her own youth and happiness. Oh, beautiful Kathleen, how I love you still! was it your fault that you joined the most designing of natures to the most undesigning, most gushing of manners?

Lady Killowen belonged to the race of useful mothers; not that she looked after her daughter's wardrobe; indeed, she had nothing to do with the designs of her sometimes slightly startling toilettes, nor was it ever by her advice that Kathleen, on rainy days, or days she chose to call

rainy, would appear in an extraordinarily old-looking winter dress, and the simplest of garden hats. No, Lady Killowen took trouble about no toilette but her own, nor did she pique herself upon her *cuisine*, or upon the careless grace that some ladies are proud of being able to impart to their drawing-room furniture ; but all the same she was a very useful mother, and as Kathleen would often say, there was no fun in going any where “unless mother went too.” So now when her daughter went up to her, she immediately relieved her of the possible burden of her friend, leaving Kathleen free again to devote her whole attention to Mr. De Veux, who, as a young gentleman of property, was the fitting object for it.

“How amusing Miss O’Grady seems to find that simpleton young De Veux !” said Mrs. Courteney, as with difficulty she swept her lilac train past the group.

“That is the way you ladies always treat what is said to you—when we men

are so desperately in earnest," added the Major, in an undertone, accompanied by one of his dangerous looks.

Mrs. Courteney tossed her head. "You don't mean to tell me that boy is in earnest. He's engaged to a girl in his own county, I believe, or something of the kind."

"Some people's charms would make one forget more than that even. Not Miss O'Grady's though, I don't mean," said the Major. Here a steamboat violently blew off steam close beside them, and the flirtation which had been getting deeper and deeper all the afternoon was checked for a little. How often ought Mrs. Courteney to have been grateful to those steamers, I wonder, during the course of that season. Some people consider them the bane, and some the making of Ryde Pier, ever bringing life and novelty into the scene. Major O'Connor often blessed them, I know that; but he was a rash man, the

Major, ever going further than he intended, and the steamboats with their noise and bustle just gave him time to discover this, and beat a retreat before order was restored.

“What a dress Mees O’Grady has—the Honourable Katleen—how you call her?” chattered Miss Zieri in her foreign English to Mr. Simpson, her right hand supporter. He had £40,000 a year, and owned one of the largest schooner yachts in the Ryde club, and never talked, which suited Miss Zieri, who did not like to be interrupted. Besides these he had no other very apparent merits; though he was quite sufficiently tall. “Really English young girls must have great shame of their feet, or does she wear it so long to catch people in it? Mr. De Veux is one catch, *n’est-ce pas?* and he is standing on it now and he does not see; *ah! comme c’est drôle! Regardez* how he stands with open mouth, and she wants to walk once more, and he does not

look to her, though she makes such a pretty face at him. Ah, there the mother has sent them off again; she has accomplished it. How much has M. De Veux a year? do tell me, you know everything."

"Haw, haw," laughed Mr. Simpson, "only what you tell me, Miss Zieri!"

"Ah bah! I know nothing. I am but a stranger, and you—you have been at Ryde, oh! a thousand times. *Dites donc*, Major De Lancey, how much is it? Mr. Simpson is so stupid. *Voilà*, now I shall not talk to you any more." And for a few seconds the little coquette did not speak to him, only giving him the intricacy of her back hair to study, and her tiny waist to admire. It was the latter that had captivated the bulky Mr. Simpson, who had by no means grown slighter since he took to yachting; but though he was for ever showing himself about with Miss Zieri, that is during the last fortnight, since he had made her acquaintance he was not quite captivated yet. "A little

foreign girl without a rap," he called her to himself; "No, no, not quite so green as all that," and he shook his wise head.

All the same he was thinking of her, and if Miss Zieri had only known this, and known also how very difficult it was to get an idea into his thick head, she would have felt that she had achieved a great triumph; for Mr. Simpson had never really thought about any girl before. Like many another young man, he took for granted that all young ladies were secretly smitten with him, and being well aware of his £40,000 a year, he took it equally as a matter of course that all mothers would give much to make him their son-in-law, and intending to choose his own wife some day or other, steered very clear of enterprising chaperones. But he had never even gone so far towards taking pity on one of the young ladies, as to decide he would not do so, and this he had already done several times as regarded Miss Zieri, so she may be said to have gained a real triumph.

All this time Miss O'Grady was not walking up and down, like these other two ladies, snatches of whose conversation we have been hearing; her dress was too long to do any thing of that kind with effect in such a crowd, as is to be seen on Saturdays on Ryde Pier during the season, she was leaning over the railings in a studiously careless attitude, and to say truth, she was looking rather bored. Mr. De Vaux was not brilliant, he would not have had wit enough even to detach himself from the others so as to obtain this tête-à-tête, had it not been for Lady Killowen. After a few minutes devoted to welcoming Sybil Mordaunt, whose being in Ryde they had not before known of, she turned to one of the young men, who had been sitting with Kathleen on the steps.

"Sandy," she said, "how could you let your cousin sit on those steps? Kathleen, I am shocked at you, such bad style."

Sandy Beaumont did not seem much disturbed by her reproaches; he was a well formed young man, about the average height with broad strong-looking shoulders, that seemed as if they could take a good deal of responsibility upon themselves without feeling it much; his whole bearing and dress showed the profession he belonged to, as clearly as if he had worn Her Majesty's uniform, without requiring any aid from the light brown moustache, that was already beginning to shade the decided well-shaped mouth. You could hardly look at him without thinking what a formidable antagonist he would make in a wrestling match; otherwise there was nothing at all striking about him, but the humourous smile that lighted up his face now was very pleasing, as he said :

“Well, we didn't think the steps at all a bad form, did we, Kathleen?”

“What, is that meant for a pun? Oh, Sandy, you're not fit to be spoken to, certainly not to be trusted with your

cousin. Mr. De Veux, I shall make you responsible for her. Are you going to walk any more, my dear? Now don't go down the steps again, or people will talk of you together."

"That would be dreadful, would it not?" laughed Kathleen, as they went away together.

Mr. De Veux said "Not at all, I should like it immensely;" but he did not follow up this opening that had been given him, and the beauty felt rather bored, leaning over the railings, for Sandy was not there. Sandy, who with his own absurdly bad jokes and comical expressions, had that happy art of making others for the time both lively and apparently witty; he was head over ears in love with his beautiful cousin, and she knew it, and was by way of snubbing him unmercifully, so that he often vowed he would have nothing more to do with her. But then she would write him one of her sweet little notes, if he was away from her—his regiment was

just now quartered at Portsmouth over the water—or if he was near at hand, she would have a long serious tête-à-tête with him, discussing his future prospects, poor enough, poor young fellow, and saying how weary she was of the idle butterfly life she led; and as she excelled at this kind of thing, her cousin would quickly be her devoted slave again, and swear that any amount of snubbing must be borne, if he could not otherwise enjoy the society of the adorable Kathleen. But just at present he was a little angry with her; they had been having great fun down those steps, and Sandy knew well enough that all the fun had originated in himself, and not in that foolish fellow, De Veux; yet Kathleen, as was a little way of hers, had made it appear otherwise, nettling her cousin not a little in the doing so.

So now, he having no desire to exert himself further in order to make Mr. De Veux agreeable to Kathleen,

thought it not a bad idea to try if he could arouse a little jealousy by appearing fascinated by her friend's looks, and hung about Lady Killowen waiting for an introduction.

He found Miss Mordaunt, however, anything but a useful tool with which to revenge himself. She took everything he said in his loose careless way quite seriously; the compliments he paid her seemed to have no effect upon her, for she treated them as a matter of course, and did not once reward him with a glance out of the sad dark eyes which he had rather admired, when he had seen them turned upon his cousin, and as she would not take a turn with him, and did not originate any conversation herself, the intercourse between them soon began to flag. Lady Killowen's attention seemed quite taken up talking to two of the Ryde notabilities, who were begging her to patronise a charity concert they were getting up, and while Sandy was stand-

ing idle, up came Major De Lancey and passed his arm through his.

“ You promised to introduce me to your cousin. Won’t you do it now ?”

De Lancey was not a man to be refused, though Sandy was not quite inclined for it at the moment, and before the two had made their way to her, young Lord Faversham had joined the Irish beauty, and was already carrying on furiously. He was rather thrown into the shade by Major De Lancey, for though the latter was in the line, and Kathleen very much despised the foot, as she called it, and often made poor Sandy, who was in the same regiment, blush at belonging to it, yet she very much preferred the attentions of a full grown man to those of a boy, even though he was a boy earl. Besides she saw at once that Major De Lancey was a gentleman and a man of the world, though he had the misfortune of being in the line, so she devoted herself to him to the neglect of Lord Faversham’s pretty speeches

and adoring looks. He was too hopelessly smitten for there any longer to be any pleasure in flirting with him; now De Veux's being said to be engaged already gave a piquancy to anything of the kind with him, though he was too young too; besides though not half so good-looking as Lord Faversham, who might have sat any day for the picture of a cherub, he had full nine inches advantage of him. Not that Mr. De Veux was by any means bad looking either; though too lanky to look good for much where physical strength might be required, he did very well in a ball-room with his silky light brown hair waving off a narrow but beautifully white forehead, large limpid blue eyes, a fairly aquiline nose, and a curling moustache gracefully effacing the outline of his mouth, though it did not conceal how very often that unhappy organ was held open, even when its owner had no intention of using it to any purpose.

He would soon have been far less in-

teresting to Miss O'Grady than the pretty boy earl, if he had been only half as much interested in her; but it was provoking to have a man hanging about her all day long, and never showing by word or look if he found the doing so pleasant or not; she was not the girl to rest easily till he had done so.

Now he stood by and listened with his mouth open as usual, while Kathleen and Major De Lancey talked Rome, or rather mutual acquaintances there; for he had been there the same winter as she had, only arriving there later after Lord Killowen's death, and his daughter's retirement from the society of which she had been such a brilliant ornament for a short time. Sandy, Kathleen took not the smallest notice of; she had noticed his temporary desertion of herself and attempt on Miss Mordaunt, and she had seen his signal defeat there, and despised him greatly.

She looked very beautiful as she stood,

still leaning on the railings talking to Major De Lancey, the three others mutely admiring her. "A glorious creature, by Jove," a group of young Portsmouth officers pronounced her, as they stood at a respectful distance making their comments on the young ladies of Ryde. The black velvet dress, immensely long as Miss Zieri had so contemptuously remarked, made a good setting for her with all her brilliant colouring, and it was saved from that funereal look which black velvet will sometimes wear by the rich white lace, all ladies now make, new old point, as it is somewhat ludicrously called, with which it was fancifully trimmed. Her hat was of black velvet with a plummy white ostrich feather curling well over it, and falling caressingly over the golden hair, drawn off her face and coiled up behind in massive lustrous plaits, that showed off to advantage the small well shaped head, and were thus not suffered to dim the brilliancy of her complexion as very

shining hair will sometimes do. Her never ceasing play of countenance was however her chief charm, and that was seen to full advantage now, for Major De Lancey was a really agreeable man, and he had hit upon an interesting subject. But Kathleen could never be quite absorbed by any one thing or person for long at a time.

“I must really go and talk to Miss Mordaunt,” she said now. “We used to be such friends long ago, and this is the first time we’ve met for about two years. Is it not nice to find out she’s living here with an old aunt! Poor dear, she looks very unhappy. I mean that we should amuse her as much as possible while we are here. Do you know her, Major De Lancey? she is awfully clever, far too clever for me. It’s so good of her to be friends with me, I always think—and do notice her feet, they are wonderfully small. General Vivyen made her try on a Chinese slipper one day, and she really all but got it on. He said it was the very

smallest foot he had ever seen on an European, and so well shaped, too, and he's one of the best judges there is about any thing of the kind. I'd sooner take his opinion than any man's I know about beauty. What are you doing, dear? do come and take a turn. You'll get quite bored sitting still."

Miss Mordaunt got up with alacrity, and looked up at Kathleen with her large dark eyes, so as almost to make Sandy swear; why could not she have looked at him in that way? surely Kathleen would have thought him worth attending to, if he had won such a look as that from her friend; as to caring about it for itself, he was much too far gone in admiration of his cousin's blue eyes, to see any charm in brown ones; perhaps Sybil had seen this, who knows? Major De Lancey was the only one of the group on whom that look was not quite thrown away; he wrote down in the tablets of his memory that Miss Mordaunt was a young lady with as

fine and expressive a pair of dark eyes as anyone could wish to see, but he was not the sort of man to care about any bit of beauty of the kind; only, as, in duty bound, he looked out for the small foot, he did so with more expectation of being gratified, than he would have done before seeing the eyes; but the simple serge dress, short though it was compared to Miss O'Grady's, effectually hid it, so he turned from her to the beautiful Kathleen again.

Just then Lady Killowen called her daughter up to her to introduce her to Lady Long, who was most kindly anxious for her to sing at the grand amateur charity concert that Lady Killowen had already consented to patronise. Kathleen executed a sweeping curtsey, coming up from it all smiles and blushes. She really had no voice at all, never had sung except joining in a chorus. But it was so kind to ask her, she should enjoy it immensely, if— In the end she consented of course :

“My dear, do comfort me,” she said, going back to Sybil, “I’m in agonies. I’ve undertaken to sing to ever so many hundred people, and I know just as much about music as I do about fighting.”

“Oh, Kathleen! I believe you would sing beautifully if you only practised. I’m sure I’ve heard you.”

Kathleen looked very serious over what she seemed to consider her friend’s flattery, then she sighed deeply.

“No, I’ve put my foot in it, and I’ll take any odds I break down shamefully. But it would have been simply the most ill-natured thing in the world, if I had refused; Lady Long was so pressing. What a charming manner she has!”

This she addressed to Mr. De Veux, who was as usual standing “at ease,” quite neglecting his duty of admiring her; he now looked as if he didn’t think so, but hardly liked to disagree with her, so Major De Lancey spoke for him. “I think

you would hardly say so if you knew her better."

"Oh, I dare say she's a horrid old humbug. But I'm always taken by a manner like that. It always does for me at once. Sandy, what have you done with my cloak? Seeing the sun set always makes me shiver, you ought to know that by this time, and I asked you to bring it down for me."

"No, indeed," said Sandy, "I said you'd be sure to want it, and you declared you wouldn't. You don't want me to go all the way to fetch it now, I suppose."

"How cross you are to-day; you want me to catch cold, I believe. Do go and sulk by yourself, for you don't seem fit company for anyone else; you haven't opened your mouth to say anything pleasant for the last half hour. I'm sure I don't know what I've done to offend you. Oh, deary me, how cold this wind is!"

"Let me hold my umbrella over you, that will keep it off," cried little Lord Faversham, longing to do any service,

however small a one, for the beloved object.

“If you come to the other side, you will be quite sheltered,” said Major De Lancey.

While Sandy in despair at seeing her so completely engrossed, said good humouredly. “Well, if I am to sulk by myself, as you say, I may as well fetch your cloak. But another day, please let me bring it down in the first instance.”

Then he went, feeling himself a precious fool all the time, and had only got about half way down the pier coming back, when he met his aunt and cousin coming up for dinner, Lord Faversham alone now in attendance. They were all coming up in the tram, as the large one-horse omnibus on the tram-way, by the side of the walking part of the pier is called; so he had nothing to do but to walk back again by himself to meet them, when they got out at the pier gates, with the cloak hung over his arm as a sign of penitence. Kathleen

was quite “ fetched ” by this attention, as she said herself, and actually put it on to show her gratitude, though it was quite warm now between the houses ; so Sandy stood his aunt’s chaff with all his wonted *sang froid*, giving almost more than he got as was his way, and Lord Faversham was in the seventh heaven, for though Kathleen wore the cloak Sandy had brought her, she talked to the pretty boy earl. She must have been hard-hearted indeed not to have shown him some favour in return for all his boyish devotion, but gracious though she was to him, she would not be persuaded into going to the little Ryde theatre that night, though he begged her to do so with a fervour that seemed almost ludicrous, seeing that all the time he owned that he believed the piece that night would be more than usually stupid, and there were to be no good actors ; but as Kathleen would not be prevailed upon to go, Lord Faversham took his leave at the

door of their house somewhat disconsolate.

“How unkind of you, Kathleen, not to ask that poor boy in to dinner,” said Lady Killowen, “I would have myself, only I supposed you did not wish it. But really, it would not have been much trouble to you to talk to him a little, and only to look at you would be pleasure enough for him, I believe. Very unkind of you, I think it.”

“Oh, poor boy, it would have been very dull for him, and I’m not in the humour to amuse anyone to-night; besides, he’s had quite as much of my company as would be good for him for one day, I’m sure.”

“Yes, it’s ‘come, seen, and been conquered’ with Faversham,” said Sandy, “your *beaux yeux* are awful bad company for such an inflammable little fellow. Much better for him to go and cool himself over a cigar, than to come here to dinner.”

CHAPTER II.

KATHLEEN O'GRADY'S BYGONES.

CLARENCE VILLA, which Lady Killowen had taken for the season, was just outside the town of Ryde, close to the sea, which all the best rooms looked out upon. This is almost always the case in Ryde, even when by reason of intervening houses the sea itself is quite hidden. In the spring and winter, when the cold north-easters bluster up the Solent, people groan and wonder how it is that the houses none of them contrive to have any south rooms. But just now those seaward-looking rooms were very pleasant, and the view from Clarence Villa was reckoned one of its chief charms. The drawing-room, how-

ever was darkened by the verandah with overhanging creepers, so that in the verandah itself was Kathleen's favourite seat, and it was there she withdrew after dinner on the Saturday I have been describing.

Lady Killowen remained inside working, she was very fond of wonderfully elaborate lace work, and was busy now with the very last new thing in braid invented for it. Sandy lolled on the sofa, talking to her; there was no one whom he considered better company than his aunt, when she was in a good-humour, unfortunately this evening she was put out. She had wished to go down the pier; like most of the visitors to Ryde they spent the fine evenings there, when not at some party or other, and Lady Killowen wearing too much crape as yet to go to parties, valued all the more highly her small pier dissipation, so when Kathleen had said :

“ Oh no, I can't go to the pier again, I've had enough of it for one day, good-

ness knows. But you can go without me, mother; Sandy can take care of you, and the tête-à-tête won't be too much for the minds of the good people of Ryde, will it?"

When Kathleen had said this, her mother turned sulky. "I certainly shan't go without you, Kathleen, you know I never do."

No, all the little amusements were supposed to be for the young girl, and the mother often said and really believed that she herself was happiest in the heart of the country, looking up curious insects, and doing a little amateur farming; but it was not really the case, and none knew better than Kathleen, how very fond her mother was of the world and its pleasures. Lady Killowen, however, had never admitted such a thing to herself, so she was always particularly annoyed when anything like this refusal of her daughter's to go on the pier made it seem as if she cared about society for herself. So she brooded over it

as she worked, and was snappish to Sandy, who, as her favourite nephew, was well used to bearing the brunt of her ill-humour.

At last when coffee came—it came so much too late at Clarence Villa, Sandy always thought, quite when one had given up expecting it—Kathleen came in from the verandah, the golden hair very rough upon her forehead, and the plaits even hanging loose in a woe begone manner, peculiar to her when she was out of spirits; her cheeks were flushed, and there was no smile now to hide the sorrowful expression of her eyes. She drank her coffee in silence, and then was going back to the verandah.

“Kathleen,” called out her mother, “if you have got a headache you had much better go to bed.”

“My head does not ache at all, mother, I am only tired. There was such a mob on the pier to-day, and I’ve nothing I wish to do; it’s much pleasanter out here.”

“I’ve no patience with a great strong girl like you being tired. You don’t take half enough exercise,” and Lady Killowen’s thread snapped as she tugged at it in her indignation. Then Sandy felt so displeased with his aunt, that he cared no longer about displeasing her, so he went outside to his cousin; who seemed very tired as she had said, and rather melancholy as well. After a few vain attempts Sandy determined to try what he thought, though rather unwillingly, must prove an interesting topic.

“What do you think of De Lancey, Kathleen? He’s a good one for talking, isn’t he?”

“He talks well,” replied she, somewhat listlessly. “You have always told me so much about him, that I was glad to make his acquaintance, for your sake, Sandy.”

“Very kind of you, really; certainly no one could have a better friend than he has been to me. But suppose you

were to take a little interest in me now, just for my sake too."

"I take a very great interest in you always, Sandy. You know that, well enough. But you haven't been getting into any trouble lately—you're not in debt again, are you?"

"Oh, no, I'm rather flush just now. That last Derby quite set me up for a bit. I say, Kathleen, you'll be going over to Goodwood, won't you?"

"Well, I don't know. Mother can't go, you see."

"Oh! but you'll go with me. That will be first rate; I tell you what, Kathleen, I'll drive you over in Jumper's dog-cart—no end of a swell turn out, and such a clipper as the horse is. He's the best fellow going, and will lend me anything as soon as look at me, and I heard him settling the other day about driving over a lot of our fellows four-in-hand. Oh, you will go with me in the dog-cart, it will be quite glorious!"

“Really, Sandy, you must be rather glorious, I should say. You and mother must have had something hot and strong together before the coffee came; something seemed decidedly to have gone to her head when I looked in just now, and as to you, you’re quite muddled. Do you take me for the junior ensign? the idea of *my* driving over in a dog-cart alone with you to Goodwood, when Jumper himself, as you call him, is going four-in-hand too. Pray were we to start from your quarters? and was I to drop into the mess-room to breakfast—sherry and soda! That’s all the breakfast you have, I believe. Come, it’s time for mother and me to go to bed now; so you’d better be off to your hotel. Perhaps you’ll find some company better suited to you there; you’re uncommonly stupid to-night, old boy, or rather I’m in no humour for talking,” and whilst she spoke Kathleen rose up, looking grander and statelier than any young

lady ever did look before this slang-talking nineteenth century came in. Young ladies keep men at such a distance by their dress now-a-days, that they have to draw nearer to them than of old in their talk, or love-making would soon become one of the forgotten arts.

Poor Kathleen! she was feeling very “down in the mouth” that evening, as she would have said herself. Major De Lancey had been very agreeable on the pier; but he had made the mistake, by no means a common one, of choosing too interesting a subject. If it had not been for that gay time at Rome, I wonder would Katharine’s after-life have been so very different; had it really had so great an effect upon her character, as she thought it had? As every now and then in her serious moods she felt herself growing more and more into the character she had started by so despising—that of a heartless flirt—she attributed it all to that short time at Rome. But

it is hard to say whether she was right in doing so; for a girl who could flirt so well and so successfully had a great temptation to resist, or to succumb to, and Kathleen was fast succumbing. There was hardly any one who knew her, who would not have said she had already done so, except of course those who were blinded by her charms. She had few women friends, very few, and of these Sybil Mordaunt was the only one who would not have owned to her faults. She always said, "I know she seems fast, and it would be flirting in any one else. But she is so impulsive, she never thinks what she is about, and I believe it is just as well, for she has such noble impulses." But then Sybil and Kathleen had been friends as quite young girls, and before the latter went to Rome; now they had met again, and were to see how the friendship of two years ago would stand, whether it had been friendship at all, or only the effect of circumstances. But all

this time I am not telling what had happened at Rome to canker our fair English rosebud. So to come to the heart of the matter at once, I must say who was the villain of that short Roman drama. An Italian, nobleman, of course, dear reader, you are quite right; but do not let your expectations fly too high; he was not a prince, nor even a duke, but a count of the Holy Roman Empire.

The Count Manfredi had been introduced to Kathleen her very first evening at Rome. To show that they were not tired by their journey, thought nothing of it in fact, and left all household arrangements to their servants entirely, she and her mother had gone to a large evening reception at Mrs. Tilletson's, an old friend of Lady Killowen's, their very first night. It was a very innocent bit of bravada, for Lord Killowen was tired enough to prefer going at once quietly to bed, and the servants were just as well pleased not to be interfered with in their unpacking; anyhow Lady Killowen

and her daughter went and rather astonished the world by their sudden appearance, greatly to their own satisfaction. Kathleen was full of the idea of Rome, mad about its antiquities, but still madder about its future. She knew most of Browning by heart, lost no opportunity of praising Adolphus Trollope at the expense of Anthony, wore a miniature of Garibaldi as a bracelet clasp, and vowed she preferred pink coral to diamonds; she was very young then. Early in the evening Mrs. Tillotson came up to her: "My dear, there's an Italian dying to be introduced to you. I don't like to refuse, as he's quite one of the leaders of fashion; but don't lose your heart to him, mind, for he's a dreadful *mauvais sujet*, and all Rome will be at your feet directly. You're just like your mother, as I remember her, my dear, only fairer; all the better that is for your success here," and whilst Kathleen was still covered with blushes, Count Manfredi was introduced to her, and before

the evening was over, Kathleen felt that Mrs. Tillotson's warning had been but words wasted, if indeed it had not had exactly the contrary effect to that which she had intended, as such judiciously worded warnings sometimes will have. She had often had compliments paid her before, but never such compliments as the Count's; they did not only make her blush, they intoxicated her. Then he seemed to have exactly the same ideas as she had about Italy's future, only more clearly defined; he did not know Browning, but he quoted Tasso—Petrarch too sometimes, even that first night—and he called Italy "my country." His eyes too! the Count was not a handsome man; Kathleen knew she had not thought him so before making his acquaintance, though she had noticed him at once in the crowd, for he was not a man who could easily pass unnoticed. But his eyes! it was not only that they were so large and dark; they had such an intensity of expression when they fixed

themselves upon any one. Even in this enlightened century, many of his countrymen would cross themselves as they passed him by, dreading their possible evil influence. And saved though she was by her English bringing up from any such superstitious notions, the blue-eyed English girl felt there was no resisting them, and gave herself up at once to their influence.

The Count was introduced to Lady Killowen that night, and before the party broke up, many plans had been formed between them; how he was to get them permission for this sight, and to escort them to that, and how some day, not very far hence, he was to invite them to a *déjeuner* at his villa, and show them the famous view from thence, and the family jewels. Lady Killowen piqued herself on being a connoisseur about jewels, and some of those in the Manfredi family were world celebrated. But it matters little to tell how it all came about; the Count was a prudent man of the world, and was really

taken by this fresh young beauty, who surrendered herself so unresistingly to him, and whom no one restrained by those countless fairy fetters with which Italian girls are bound hand and foot, so he took care Kathleen was as little talked of with himself as possible.

She herself took no thought of this, any more than did her mother, who had less excuse for her carelessness; as for Kathleen, she did not even know the meaning of the verb to compromise, so innocent was she in those days, and yet she had been out for half a season in town, and thought herself a wonder of worldly wisdom. But the Count knew it very well, and he knew that a man might be compromised once too often, even for Rome, especially if he only cared to mix in its best society, as he only did, and he did not mean to marry Lord Killowen's daughter and yet he almost loved her, and this almost love also made him reluctant to see the fresh bloom visibly brushed off her in

the world's eyes, even were it to be done by himself. So he infused even more mystery into his proceedings with regard to her, than he would otherwise have done, knowing well that this mystery would prove an additional irresistible charm for Kathleen, and would add so much to the sweetness of those opportunities of intercourse between them which he thought fit to profit by, as quite to make up for those others he would relinquish out of respect to the world. A few half illegible words pencilled on her dance card before it was handed back to her, a bouquet with a note in it, assignations often at places where they would quite as certainly have met without them, trifles of this kind perfected the glamour that had been thrown over her that first evening, if anything had been required to perfect it, accompanied as they all were by looks that spoke volumes; nay, much more than that, no number of volumes could have expressed what those looks did, and so it all went on; while

Lord Killowen lived on his quiet invalid life, seeming to get neither better nor worse, till at last one afternoon he had an attack of hæmorrhage. He lingered a day or two after that, but in a hopeless state, and then he died. The Count Manfredi twice left cards to enquire, once before, and once after the funeral; but he never asked to see the ladies, and soon after that they left Rome, and Kathleen heard no more of him, except that in the one letter of Roman news Mrs. Tillotson wrote to Lady Killowen, in answer to her's telling of their safe arrival, she said :

“ Kathleen's admirer, Count Manfredi, has been at his old ways again with a very handsome Mrs. Courteney. They say the husband is a great fool; hearing what was going on, he got leave from his regiment at Malta, and hurrying here, insisted on carrying her back with him. There seems to have been rather an *esclandre* about it, and now he has exchanged into another regiment, giving out that Malta does not

suit her health—she was here for change—but some people say that no place will, where her husband is, and that it was just like his folly to interfere at all, she did not care a bit about the Count, and only let him pay her attentions to pass away the time. I'm sure I don't know; he was certainly very devoted. Who are Kathleen's admirers now? I am just as glad she is not likely to see anything more of the Count, and, I dare say, so are you."

Then the letter branched off to other subjects, and as Lady Killowen never answered it, being always a bad correspondent, Kathleen had heard no more Roman news, till this Saturday when Major De Lancey was introduced to her, who had gone there just after they left. Count Manfredi's flirtation with Mrs. Courteney, ended so suddenly as it was by her husband, had made people forget his previous, and seemingly so innocent one with Kathleen; so that Major De Lancey, though hearing many regrets at the beauty's de-

parture, had never heard her name mentioned in conjunction with the Count's, and in a few minutes she drew out from him a brief account of the little romance that had taken place after she had come away. He did not care to enter into particulars, though he soon saw that his fair hearer had been brought up in the school that takes '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*' for its motto, and thinks nothing too shocking to be discussed. He ended by saying, quietly, as if there could be nothing particularly interesting or surprising in the information: "That is Mrs. Courteney in the white lace and lilac, walking with that tall red-haired man."

It was then that Kathleen had recollected it was two years since she had seen her dear friend, Sybil Mordaunt; she did not care to talk any more just at that moment to Major De Lancey, but she soon recovered herself, and talked more merrily than ever. Notwithstanding, she felt very sad when she came to think it over that

evening. So that woman ; that woman with nothing but white lace over her shoulders, and such evident paint, that was the woman with whom Count Manfredi had consoled himself after her departure. She knew her so well by sight, and had so cut up her and her dress often and often on the pier ; there could be no question but that she was bad form, and she had such a loud harsh voice, too, and yet Count Manfredi had been very attentive to her, and Kathleen remembered how often he had praised her own mellow voice, and said it was the greatest charm a woman could possess, and one of the many advantages English and Roman ladies had over others, and yet, when she had come away, he had devoted himself to this woman. She never forgot whilst she was thinking about this, that no one, except of course Captain Courteney, seemed to think his wife had ever cared for the Count at all ; nobody accused her of trying to attract to herself his attentions, or

of valuing them, when she had got them. What could he have seen in her to make him care about her? and Major De Lancey had said there seemed little doubt but that he did care for her, and very much too.

“I never thought him a good man,” she said, sadly to herself, “but I did think he had good taste,” and then she thought, how it would be, if she were to meet him again, and to see him devoting himself to Mrs. Courteney, and she vowed passionately that that should make no difference, neither that nor anything else. She would love him always; he was the first man she had ever cared about, and he should be the last. “I will be true to my love, whatever I do,” she said, “I know he isn’t worthy of it; but I shall not be true to him, but to my love. That would be a poor thing indeed, if my being true to it depended on whom he cared for. I know now he doesn’t care for me. He doesn’t—I suppose he never did; but I shall

never be able to leave off caring for him—so it would be no use trying, and I don't mean to try. I must be true about something, and so I will be true about caring for him; of course I shall marry somebody else. That is in the nature of things, I wonder who it will be though. Not Sandy; no, I should like that best really I think, but he's a great deal too good for me, dear boy, and it wouldn't be fair to marry him without caring for him. Then, he's got no money, and neither have I. Oh, dear! there's the coffee," and then she went into the drawing-room, as I have before said, and after drinking her coffee, she went out again, and thought again, and this time she considered within herself what she would wear at the concert, and had not thought of anything sufficiently killing, before Sandy came out and joined her.

CHAPTER III.

HOW HAPPY COULD I BE WITH EITHER !

LORD FAVERSHAM and De Veux were dining at the club together, and among a variety of other subjects, as they sat over their wine, they discussed the young ladies of Ryde, and Lord Faversham waxed eloquent over Miss O'Grady's charms. De Veux drank his wine slowly, seeming much struck by the force of the other's remarks, but not saying much. At last as the young earl came to a full stop more for want of breath than anything else, he said slowly and impressively : " She's a deuced fine girl, I grant you. But she's skittish—to my

mind it's a great fault, and she certainly is skittish."

"Skittish be d—d," shouted Lord Faversham, who had not been cooling himself over a cigar as Sandy had thought advisable, but heating himself considerably, what with the wine and the exciting nature of the subject they were discussing. "She's perfect, I tell you," and he thumped the table as he spoke.

"Who is?" asked De Lancey, coming in at this moment. "I say, what a row you two fellows are making. Will one of you come and take a hand at whist? we want a fourth."

"Oh, hang it, do you? well, I don't care if I do; only it is confoundedly hot in here, and it would be so jolly cool on the pier."

"You can easily go down there afterwards, we shan't be playing long to-night," and Major De Lancey and Lord Faversham walked off together. "Why

are you such friends with that fellow?" asked the former, as soon as they got outside the room. "He'd lose his money to you, if you wanted it; but you don't, and you won't get any other good out of him."

"He's a fool," said Lord Faversham.

"Of course he is. But being friends with a fool won't be any particular use to you, Faversham, and I can't think why you are always together. Who was that lady you were calling perfect, too?"

"Miss O'Grady," said Lord Faversham, now hanging his head, and blushing deeply as he spoke.

"Oh, Miss O'Grady, was it? well, she isn't perfect, I suppose, any more than any other woman—a finished flirt, I should say. But I would not talk of her, or of any other lady, I had any respect for, with De Veux."

"Come, De Lancey, you're prejudiced; he's not half a bad fellow after all, and

some people *do* say she'd have him, if he offered," and Lord Faversham grew almost tearful.

"Why, isn't he engaged to some girl near his own place?" and seeing a sign of assent—"Well, if he is, he must be more than half a bad fellow to go on as he does with any other girl, while that is the case. Besides he is a fool, as you say, Faversham, and you can't learn too soon that folly is catching."

Then they joined the other two men and sat down to whist, and after Lord Faversham had roused his partner's wrath to an almost alarming extent, by some unusually preposterous play, he cooled down sufficiently to take an interest in the game, and show that skill in it which he really possessed. De Lancey had known well enough which of the two young men would be likely to accept his invitation, or he would not have given it. De Vaux, left by himself, sat a little

longer over his wine, muddling his never very bright intellects, till at last he thought, as Faversham said, the room was very hot, and it would be much pleasanter on the pier; so he sauntered out, and at the door of the club he met Sandy.

“I say, Beaumont, come down the pier with us, old fellow. It’s horrid hot in there.”

“I dare say, I wasn’t thinking of going in,” and Sandy in his easy going way let De Veux link his arm in his, and proceeded to the pier with him.

“I say, Beaumont,” said De Veux again; it was a very common beginning with him. “Whose was that bay mare with the white star on her forehead, I saw knocking about your quarters, when I was over the other side this morning?”

“Oh, Stella, you mean, I suppose. She’s Jumper’s, and a beauty she is. He’s as good a judge of horseflesh as any man

I know, and that mare he picked up at Newmarket two years ago. Directly he saw her, he says he took a fancy to her, so though the fellow who'd bred her asked £200, Jumper forked out at once, and now he could easily get twice that if he cared to part with her. But he's lots of tin, I only wonder he cares to stay in the service; he gets lots of leave though for all the races, and in the hunting season too, and that's all he cares about."

"It's not very good hunting in these parts, is it?" said De Veux. "I shouldn't mind it your side, but over here it would be a long time before I'd care to ride down some of the hills."

"I believe you, my boy," said Sandy, who was himself somewhat of a centaur on horseback, though he had never owned even a pony; but he had had the run of the stables of some of his relations from very early years. De Veux, who owned as large a stud as was re-

quired by the exigencies of his particular branch of the cavalry, and appeared every day of the season in town on a showy thorough-bred in the Row, but who was known not to be good at fences, feared his friend might be laughing at him, so abruptly changed the subject.

“You’ve been dining at Lady Killowen’s, haven’t you? lucky dog.”

“Yes, she always gives me my feed when I’m over here. I wish she’d put me up too; hotel bills run up such a precious rate.”

“Rather, don’t they? I say what a pity it is your governor spent all his tin. Now, if you’d a few thousands, I dare say you might make up to that cousin of your’s,” and De Vieux gave him what he meant for a knowing look. It was lost upon Sandy though, who was engaged lighting a cigar.

“Never thought of that,” he said, puffing away vigorously.

“Ah! now didn’t you really? well of

course there'd be no use thinking of it, as you haven't got the tin. Your cousin runs for pretty high stakes, I should say." This time his expression, though intended to be as knowing as before, was inquiring as well; but it was equally lost upon Sandy, who continued smoking in silence, disdaining to talk of his cousin with such a fellow as De Veux; then thinking he might as well extinguish him, began :

"You're engaged to a girl somewhere down the country, arn't you?"

"Yes, I am engaged," said De Veux, very slowly and deliberately, after pausing a moment to consider, during which he also produced a cigar.

"Why, you say it, as if you were not. Do you mean to throw her over; or is she jilting you, or what?"

"No, I don't mean to throw her over, and she's not at all likely to be jilting me," said De Veux, in the same deliberate tones.

"Her mother took a precious lot of trouble

catching me, I know that," and he laughed a disagreeable laugh.

"Well, I shouldn't say that of the mother of the girl I was going to marry. But then, I'm not worth catching, so no one's ever tried it on with me," and Sandy laughed, not a very pleasant laugh either. He was thinking what sort of fortune De Veux must have to make him more worth a mother's getting as a husband for her daughter, than himself: "I wonder how much it is," he thought to himself.

"Yes, that's just it," said De Veux. "No one ever tried it on with you; but they have with me, and as for that I am not going to marry the mother, so I shall say what I choose about her. Helen is not at all like her," he added, after a few moments' pause.

"Is she pretty?" asked Sandy, carelessly.

"Oh, yes, very pretty; but nothing like your cousin, you know."

Sandy winced. "Why, what has that

to do with it?" and standing still, he looked straight into his companion's face, then began knocking his cigar ash off on the pier railings.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," stammered De Veux. "Of course a fellow wouldn't break with one girl, because she was not as pretty as another girl. But if that other girl would have him, why then—"

"Why, what on earth do you mean?" cried Sandy, now fairly roused. "What on earth do you mean by talking of one girl, and another girl—and my cousin, too? I won't have her talked of in this sort of way."

"Come now, old fellow, there's no use in quarrelling. You must have seen for a long time that I was sweet on her, and you might as well tell me what the odds are. It's not as if you had any chance—I shouldn't ask you then—but you know you couldn't marry her on your pay. You *know* you couldn't, Beaumont, so you might as well be my friend as anyone else's, and

what's the use of my breaking with Helen, if I can't get the other afterwards. You wouldn't have me offer as it is, would you?" and a sudden light seemed to break upon him, for he had never thought of this plan before.

"By Jove, I never thought you were such a brute, De Veux," growled Sandy, "and you think my cousin could care for you!"

"Oh, no, I don't. It's the money you know. No, I don't think about her caring for me; but she might marry me without. I'd be quite satisfied if I could only make sure she'd have me. For she's a glorious creature, as Faversham says, glorious. Of course she don't care for me; but how should she ever marry anyone she cares about, if she runs for high stakes. The odds are all against its being the same man, the one with money, and the one she'd care about. Now, he might be like you, Beaumont, and you know she couldn't marry you; so why shouldn't she take me,

whether she cared for me or not. I say, old fellow, you might as well be my friend now, you really might; do you think she'd have me?"

They were at the end of the pier now, leaning on the railings at the left hand end, as you go down, looking back at Ryde. It was a fine calm evening, with just a little ripple so as to lengthen out the reflections of the many lights in the town, almost indefinitely. Sandy thought he could distinguish that from Kathleen's window, and looking at it, and thinking of her, as she had been that evening, he said, very firmly, "No, I do not." But it cost him a twinge only to say that and nothing more, for he did not just then think himself quite so much out of the running as De Vaux had seemed to do.

The latter seemed rather mortified. "You don't, don't you," and he threw his cigar away, showing thereby that he only smoked for fashion's sake, not because he really liked it, or he would not have parted

with his cigar just then, when he wanted a little consolation. No man, who really liked smoking, would have thrown away his cigar just then, not unless it was quite smoked out, and he was on the point of lighting another. But De Veux was annoyed by Sandy's answer, and that put him out of sorts with everything else; so he threw away his cigar, having nothing else to hand that he could throw away, and did not light another. Sandy, though the shorter, was a good stone the heavier, and De Veux would not have cared to try muscle with him. After a few minutes some comfort occurred to him. "I believe it is better to have a wife that cares for one, and Helen certainly cares for me, certainly."

Sandy would have liked to have told his companion again, what a brute he thought him; but somehow his conscience was not clear enough for that. He could not make up his mind whether they were rivals or not; he saw painfully clearly the

force of De Veux assertions that Kathleen must marry a rich man. But then was it quite certain that he himself would never be rich; he knew of no way in which he was likely to become so, but somehow he had never thought of himself as doomed to poverty for all his days, and often planned what he would do, when he came into a fortune—marry Kathleen, of course, if she would have him. That was always his first thought, and De Veux himself seemed to think she might in that case.

“Anyhow, she would never have him,” said Sandy, to himself, “so I am being honest towards him.”

He was watching a dark-looking boat passing across the little stream of light that he fancied came from Kathleen’s window, and he felt impatient for the boat to pass, that he might see the stream of light clear and unbroken again, and strained his eyes to watch it. Just as he was about to pronounce it quite clear to himself, the light was put out; then Sandy

turned impatiently from the railings, and began walking along the broad end bit of the pier, where the Ryde world promenades, De Veux still sticking to him :

“What is she like ?” asked Sandy, after a short silence, meaning Helen, of course, not Kathleen ; for he was ashamed of being so much wrapped up in his own thoughts, and did not know what his companion might think of it.

“Oh, she’s a little thing, and she has fair hair and blue eyes like Miss O’Grady. But she’s nothing to compare to her, of course ; she is like a rosebud every one says, and Miss O’Grady—she—she’s the full-blown rose.”

“The queen of roses, you mean,” said Sandy, by no means thinking his cousin flattered by the other’s comparison. “But if she cares for you, De Veux, you couldn’t have the heart to break with her, could you ?”

“Oh, but,” said the other with another of his knowing looks, “the more she cares

for me the sooner she'll find out if I care for any one else more, and then there's nothing so bad to bear as jealousy, they say. Better break with her at once than expose her to that; you see one pain would only last a short time, she'd soon console herself, I dare say—and the other all her life. Hang it, if she once found out I'd married her caring for some one else more, it would be the devil and all to pay. But, all the same, it wouldn't do to be off with one love, before one knew there was a chance of being on with the other."

"There's a proverb to the contrary," muttered Sandy, and he looked hard at the people flitting backwards and forwards in the half-darkness, or sitting round about, to see if he could distinguish any acquaintance by means of whom to get rid of his present companion, whose society was every minute becoming more and more distasteful to him. But the moon was under a cloud for the moment, so he could

not make out anyone, and De Veux regardless of the proverb went on :

“ Hang it, I don’t know how I ever should get off my engagement. I’d have to do it by writing ; if the old mother once got me into her clutches again, she’d walk us straight off to the church, I believe, rather than have had all her trouble for nothing. She nearly worked herself into a rheumatic fever by the draughts she sat in, and the damp places she went picnicing to, in order that we might see enough of each other.”

“ How much are you worth ?” asked Sandy coolly ; he wished to know, his curiosity now being fairly aroused, but he did not expect to get the information by simply asking for it ; yet if De Veux chose to be offended, he would be just as well pleased. But De Veux did not seem at all offended.

“ Oh, £8000 a year is what the estate brings in ; but then there’s a lot in India securities besides, and they’re always vary-

ing, and when my uncle hooks it, they'll be just about double, and he's over eighty now, and quite in his dotage, and it's all left to me."

"By Jove! I had no idea you had so much," said Sandy, and his surprise was so unfeigned that De Vaux took heart again, and exclaimed.

"Hadn't you? then when I asked about your cousin you really could not tell. Now don't you think—"

"Oh, there's Lady Long; I must go and speak to her," and Sandy rushed to take refuge with his particular aversion, who was seated exactly under the lamp in the middle of the pier, as he had very well known for some time, though in spite of his desire to find some acquaintance he had not been able to summon up courage to speak to her. For Lady Long had a daughter, and she knew Sandy had little more than his pay, and so snubbed him remorselessly whenever he was not with his aunt or cousin, to whom on the other

hand she made very great love, for their star was in the ascendant. Sandy was rather put to it to find something particular to say to her, and on the spur of the moment invented a very sweet message from Kathleen about the concert, which fortunately came into his head; for De Veux having an immense dislike to his own company, like most men of his class, followed him closely, and the immoveable handsome Miss Long did not say much to take up his attention. But her mother soon set that to rights, and then while they both exerted themselves to entertain the young man of property, the landless subaltern escaped unnoticed into the darkness again, looking upon that lamp as a beacon placed by the benevolent to warn the unwary off the rocks. His thoughts were not very pleasant that evening, but anything was better than the conversation he was likely to meet with about that lamp.

“Ugh! what a brute that fellow is,” he

thought to himself, "if it had been any one else I should have thought he was half screwed; I dare say he was too, he'd been dining at that club, but he's always the same, and yet I suppose he has more chance than I have, as he says."

But Sandy did not really believe it one bit, though the saying so to himself did make him feel rather down-hearted.

CHAPTER IV.

ADA COURTENAY'S BYGONES.

Now the reader must be kind enough to take a little voyage with me over the water, for we must see what was happening that same evening in some stuffy lodgings at Southsea. There, in a scantily-furnished uncomfortably-shaped little room, sat Mrs. Courteney at her writing table. The white lace and mauve silk had disappeared now, and given place to a nearly colourless tumbled-looking muslin, that had once evidently figured at gay assemblies in the daylight, and was now taken into evening wear for economy's sake, not from any vague desire of looking well. But though people might or might not have admired Mrs.

Courteney, as she peacocked it on Ryde Pier, hardly anyone could have failed to see beauty in her now, as she sat in this old tumbled dress writing by the dim light of a refractory lamp. Her masses of dark hair had somewhat loosened themselves, and were pushed backed carelessly off her face, showing to perfection the low clear forehead with its bright blue veins, and the finely cut profile was no longer distorted by the scornful hard expression she had worn among the loungers on Ryde Pier; the paint too was no longer visible in the semi-darkness.

She was writing quickly and easily, and when she had finished her letter she folded it up, without once glancing over it again; then having sealed and directed it, she for the first time showed anxiety about it, displacing several things in her desk, and hiding her letter away at the bottom of it. But hardly had she done so, when a flush came over her face, and with a scornful curl of the lip she withdrew it from its

hiding place, and arranging the desk as before left her letter at the top, to be seen at once by anyone who should open it. Then she went to the open window and looked out; the moonbeams were shining brightly on the broad white road outside and in the distance, through a gap between the opposite houses, she saw the sea tremulous in the silvery light. She had first glanced up and down the road to see if her husband were coming; then her eyes turned to the distant sea, and rested on a little white winged boat. "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!" how often, and how often has that verse come home to many a sorrow-laden heart, which has yet got no further, ever seeking comfort where it was not to be found.

From very early years had Ada Courteney been of the world worldly, and in all the years that had passed over her she had got no further than that one wish, that passionate longing to "flee away and be at

rest." Where she should flee to, she had never considered, only to "flee away and be at rest," that was all her wish. Once she had been a child, simple and innocent as other children; then as she grew older she had taken to flirting, much as her father had taken to dram drinking, to drive away dull care, and for many years she had been very successful—had been the belle of balls innumerable, and the talk of half the regiments in Her Majesty's service. She had been engaged most of the time—not to one man, *cela va sans dire*, but to a succession—at least so her acquaintance would have said; Ada Jerninghame would have told a different story. She must dress, and if the men she flirted with chose to pay her bills for her, she did not quarrel with them, though they did also choose to say she was engaged to them.

Captain Courteney had fallen desperately in love with her at the first ball he ever went to, when he was an ensign just joined; she had given him a lock of her hair, and

forgotten him. When he came back from the West Indies, a captain, young in years indeed, though with hair already turning grey, he shewed her that lock of hair, and told her how he had loved her for all those years. Ada Jerninghame's heart was touched by such constancy. The man she had last been engaged to, had jilted her cruelly, she longed to "flee away and be at rest," and she became Captain Courteney's wife, and went out with her husband and his regiment to Malta. There the beautiful Mrs. Courteney was more *fêtée* than ever Ada Jerninghame had been, and while the rest of the world flattered her, her husband grew more downright, than was pleasant, in the expressions of his opinion to her. He himself had cared for no one else but the bright vision of his youth before marriage, and he expected his wife to care for no one else now at least after marriage. She had been flirting all her life, and knew no other way of employing her time. If her husband would have

flirted with her, it would have done very well, but as he had cared for no one but her all his life, he had never learnt the art. At last at one ball the beautiful Mrs. Courteney was missing, and some one said she had started for Rome that evening in the steamer; her husband said it was for change of air, and certainly she looked much better in health, when he fetched her back, equally suddenly, a short time after. Then there was a great deal of talk among the loungers at Marisch's, the fashionable tobacconist's, and among the Sunday gathering on the Club steps to watch the church-goers down the picturesque Strada Reale, and in the stalls of the little Opera house—the new grand one was not opened then, of course. The bishop's wife left out the Courteney's name in the invitations to her next "at home;" and another regiment which was giving a ball nearly came to blows as to whether they were or were not to be asked. In the end they were, and half

the regimental ladies absented themselves, and Mrs. Courteney's dance-card was more crowded than ever, and she sat great part of the evening on a sort of throne in the balcony, surrounded by men who paid her abject compliments, while she hardly listened, and her lips curled more scornfully than ever—for she knew she was getting cut, and all their silly flattery weighed as nothing in comparison. At last her husband carried her off, and after that the change of air plan having been tried once, and having failed, he exchanged into another regiment, and he and his wife left Malta for Portsmouth.

It was but flying from Scylla to take refuge with a yet more dangerous Charybdis, for there was Major O'Connor, the old lover, who had jilted her so cruelly, and so doing had left an ineffaceable impression on Mrs. Courteney's heart. He had been accepted by a young lady with money in those days, but his engagement had only lasted a short time, for it came

to grief, as soon as settlements were discussed, and the young lady's guardians interfered. Now when Mrs. Courteney came to Portsmouth, he soon returned to his old allegiance; he never spoke of his old engagement, nor she of her marriage, but they showed themselves about together, and acted very much as if it was two years ago, and they were still engaged to each other, and often he would seem to forget, and call her by the maiden name by which he had first known her, and Mrs. Courteney would not reprove him. She did not wish to be cut, poor foolish beauty, she could not bear that people should fight shy of her, as they had been doing all her life. It was the knowledge that they did so, that made her lip curl, and gave that hard defiant expression to her face. She would far rather have been a respectable and respected member of society, if it had come naturally to her; but it never had come naturally to her, and now as she looked at that little white-

winged boat, another longing came over her, besides the longing to "flee away and be at rest," perhaps in conjunction with it, a longing to be in that little boat alone with Major O'Connor, and go far away over the water with him, and him only, and never again see any other human creature more. It was a vague, undefined longing which she would indignantly have denied, had anyone charged her with it, for she never thought that the world had had any justification for the way in which it had treated her, yet she felt it all the same. Then she saw her husband coming down the road in the clear moonlight, and withdrawing hastily from the window, she threw herself upon the sofa, appearing buried in a novel, when he came in.

"My dear," he said, in his nervous fussy manner, "I've just been talking to Hughes about that plan of yours of going over to Goodwood. I don't think it will do—I don't really;" then as his wife did not look up from her novel, he went on

still more nervously: "you see Hughes is rather a foolish fellow, and you, my dear, you arn't very wise sometimes, and I don't think you have considered—"

"No, I am sure I haven't. I don't know what you mean by my plan. I have no plan about going to Goodwood—certainly not with Captain Hughes. He's the greatest simpleton I ever came across, so you may set your mind at ease about him!" and then she seemed to read again more diligently than ever.

"Oh, indeed, my dear, thank you. But I never thought of such a thing. So you never did mean to go with Hughes; well I'm very glad, not that I've any objection to your going with him of course, but—"

"You seemed to have just now," she interrupted in angry contemptuous tones, not raising her eyes from her book, and going on reading, as if she were not listening to him.

"But, my dear, he talked of your going over without me. Without me! now you

know, my dear Ada, that wouldn't be quite the thing—not quite the thing, you know. In fact, I shall have to be on duty that day, I find I can't get off, and so don't you think you had better give up Goodwood altogether—just for this year. It wouldn't be such a great sacrifice, would it? You see I could take you over any other day myself, only not the Cup day."

"So that's what you wanted to say, is it?" said his wife, now laying down her novel, and looking coolly into his face with her large magnificent eyes. "Well then, I tell you, I am going to Goodwood, and on the Cup day too, and I don't in the least require your protection; for Major O'Connor has promised to make up a party, and to look after me, and he's quite an old friend, you know, so you can't have any objections to make against him; but in case you wish to amuse yourself in that way, just do so to the tables and chairs, if you please, for I don't wish to be kept

awake all night by your nonsense, and I am going to bed now. I have quite made up my mind as to what I mean to do," and with a stately step she swept out of the room.

She did not always behave so contemptuously to her husband, though ever since he had first gone into a frantic fit of jealousy about her, all respect for him had disappeared; but to-night she felt as if that letter she had written, was a great thing she had done for him; it was too much that then he should come in and plague her with absurd suspicions about Captain Hughes. It had cost her nothing to write her letter, she did not care in the least whether Count Manfredi followed her to England, or did not; but in writing a few peremptory lines forbidding his doing so, she felt as if she had done her husband a great favour, far more than he deserved, and so she thought she had the more right to treat him, as she pleased, afterwards. So she swept out of the room, leaving him

to meditate on her last words. "I have quite made up my mind as to what I mean to do," and yet just before she had said she had no plan about going to Goodwood at all; here was enough matter at once to inflame a suspicious man. It is needless to tell all the foolish wild thoughts that came into his head: he was a miserable man, all the more miserable that he loved his wife still. His one terrible dread was, that she would leave him; he knew that she despised him, did not care for him, and he was for ever fancying that she did care for some other man, but if she left him, he felt as if he could not bear it, he must blow his brains out. He wondered what she had been doing that evening while he was dining at mess, and he hunted about the room to find any traces of occupation. Major O'Connor had not been at mess that night; had he been spending the evening with her—the thought was madness. She could not have been reading that novel all the even-

ing, she had got such a little way in it, so he hunted about, and at last he opened the desk, and there he found the freshly written letter to the Count Manfredi lying just at the top, where she had in the end decided on leaving it. It was torn open in an instant, but then he hesitated to read it. He poured himself out a glass of gin and water, but he could not bring himself to do so. It was no sense of honour, no feeling that he ought not to pry into his wife's secrets that prevented him. It was only want of courage to face the evil he believed in; he dared not read the assurances of love for the Count Manfredi, that he fancied to be written there; so he drank glass after glass of gin and water, and yet he could not read the letter. In the end he burnt it.

Mrs. Courteney found him asleep, when she came downstairs the next morning, his head fallen forward on his arms upon the table, the gin bottle nearly empty beside him. It was not the first time she

had found him thus. She was accustomed to the sort of thing, and it did not shock her, as it would have, had she had a different bringing up; but it certainly did not tend to make her respect her husband. He had been a perfectly sober man before his marriage; I wonder, did it ever occur to her to think whether that had had any effect on the change in his character.

Later on in the morning, when she found the letter gone from her desk, her lip only curled, she was not surprised, she had always suspected her husband of prying into her secrets, though she had never been sure of it before. She did not care to charge him with it, nor did she even trouble herself to think whether he would have read the letter, or what he would have done with it; but just closed the desk again, and went on with the day's duties, as if she had noticed nothing, and neither she nor her husband spoke of any but the most indifferent subjects during the rest of that day. But Mrs. Courteney

wrote no second letter to the Count, and she thought to herself, that now he would come to England. Well, it did not matter to her; it did not matter to her at all, one way or another.

CHAPTER V.

SYBIL AND SANDY.

IT was a dull dreary day with a disagreeable east wind blowing, when the elderly Miss Mordaunt asked her niece to go down with her to the pier; she asked her as if she were conferring a favour upon her, and Sybil looked pleased as if she thought it such; but, nevertheless, her expression was more depressed than usual, and Sybil generally looked sorrowful, as she slowly got out her hat and jacket, alone in her own little room. She liked being on the pier very much; going there was, as she often told herself, almost the only pleasure she had; but Miss Mordaunt both disliked the pier for herself, and dis-

approved of it for her niece, as a silly frivolous place, where young ladies went to show their ankles, and be stared at, and make men fall in love with them, if they could, and where men went— She had never quite to her own satisfaction solved why the men did go there; but anyhow she disapproved of it for young ladies, and would not hear of her niece going there more than twice a week at the outside. So it was provoking to Sybil, that she should be taken there this particular day—the Cup day at Goodwood—when there was sure to be no one there.

“For though the air is very nice and fresh, and it is very pleasant to have shelter close at hand, in case it rains, and a dry place to walk on, still one does go a great deal for the people,” thought poor Sybil. “But it is always the way with everything Aunt Joan does; I suppose she does mean to give me pleasure, but she always just manages to fail. Of course it is very kind, but it is just like her to propose going to

the pier to-day. I don't a bit care for going, when I know Kathleen won't be there."

Sybil's was a very truthful nature, and had she said this to anyone else, I think she must have blushed; but, just thinking it to herself, she thought it all as Gospel truth, which only shows how very little people understand their own hearts, even those who, like Sybil Mordaunt, try to "know themselves." It was decidedly chilly on the pier, and Miss Mordaunt rather regretted her proposition when they got there.

"I think I had better sit down here, my dear," said she, seizing on a vacant seat in that little bit of shelter alongside the reading-room, which people generally throng into during a shower.

"We get quite enough air here, I am sure, and you won't mind standing a little while. I dare say some of these people will move presently, and it would be so cold outside."

“Yes,” replied Sybil, meekly. “It is very cold. I dare say some one will move presently.”

There was hardly anything she disliked more than standing, for she inherited her father’s and mother’s delicacy, and that tired her far more than walking, as her aunt very well knew, so she looked a little longingly at the empty benches outside. There were very few people sitting down there, though the wind made walking rather a matter of difficulty; but people get hardened to that at Ryde, and Miss Smith peacocked up and down with her yellow hair fluttering, and her usual smile of self-satisfaction, sublimely indifferent to the extent of white stocking she was displaying, and one tall handsome Miss Vivyen showed herself up and down with a seedy-looking man, apparently in difficulties about his hat, quite as much at her ease as her sister, who sat flirting with a handsome rather elderly man on the bench opposite to Sybil and her aunt.

“What bad style those girls are,” said Miss Mordaunt, “they really arn’t respectable, smiling into one man’s face after another in that way, and always alone about the pier, too! Why can’t they at least keep together? it really is disgraceful. Who is that man Grace Viyyen has got with her to-day? not much air about him, certainly. I shouldn’t be so proud of him if I were she, walking up and down with him all alone, as if he were her brother.”

“I don’t know who that is,” said Sybil. “That’s Colonel Beauchamp with Miss Vivyen. He’s been married twice already, and people say he’s looking out for another wife now. Oh! what a pretty girl that is!”

“Pretty, do you call her! I should be sorry to see you looking so affected, Sybil. Why, is she going to kiss that man, I wonder, that she puts her face so near him; pursing up her mouth, too, and smiling! dear me, it does make me angry to see girls go on in such a way. There, now

those horrid people have moved, we'd better go to their seats. Now you can sit down, my dear; oh this is much better, we can see everything. There are the Gordons; I never was on the pier yet without seeing them—a bad bringing up for those girls, I should say—and there's that handsome father of theirs. What can bring him down to the pier every day, I can't imagine."

Sybil blushed and her face brightened, as Colonel Gordon passed by with his lordly air, signifying by a good deal of dumb show his desire to approach her, but for seeing she was so well protected, for Miss Mordaunt and he were not friends at all, and then she said warmly :

"Oh, they like fresh air and I'm sure the pier has done them no harm, aunt, nothing could be simpler or nicer than the girls, or than Mrs. Gordon either, and she is so kind, and the Colonel—Oh, Mr. Beaumont, not at Goodwood! why how is that?"

“Well, I’m sure I don’t know,” said Sandy, “but you see when a fellow hasn’t got much loose cash, it’s best to keep out of the way of temptation. I’m sure you’ll agree with me, Miss Mordaunt, you don’t approve of races either, do you?”

“No, indeed,” said the aunt, while Sybil gave him a reproachful look.

But Sandy seemed inclined to be naughty, and went on, “I mean to turn over a new leaf now. After that sermon last Sunday, I couldn’t think of going to races, or touching cards, or entering a ball-room. But do you think carpet dances are equally forbidden? Now I should like to hear your opinion, Miss Mordaunt.” But while the spinster was preparing to favour him with her views, there came up Mrs. Villars, one of her particular friends, so Sandy escaped for that time, a great deal more than he deserved, too, and slipped into a seat at Sybil’s unoccupied side with a laughing inquiry as to whether he might take refuge there.

“For I don’t know what I have to expect, when your aunt’s at leisure.”

“I am shocked at you,” said Sybil, but she did not look very much shocked nevertheless. They had been a good deal thrown together of late, these two, and their intimacy had progressed very much since that first day, when Sandy had tried to get up a flirtation with Sybil, and failed so signally. He had not tried flirting with her much since, but he had talked a good deal to her, and been favoured with more than one glance from her expressive eyes, but he was casehardened against any such glances from dark eyes, blue ones might have had a different effect. Now he said with one of his comical looks :

“Don’t scold this child, he’s been such a good child all day. It really couldn’t last any longer. Nature like murder will out at last, and I wasn’t made to be good.”

“I’m sorry for that,” said Sybil with a tinge of seriousness. “But what have you been doing so good all day, and why

haven't you gone to Goodwood ? I thought you were sure to be there."

"So did I," said Sandy, in the most whimsically pathetic of tones. "But you see last night there was rather a row at Clarence Villa ; I don't mind telling you, because you know all Kathleen's secrets, of course. I believe you young ladies are never happy till you have poured out every thing into the sympathizing bosom of a friend, are you ? and so, you know, my aunt was going on as she does sometimes, and declaring it wasn't proper for Kathleen to go with the Zieris, and all that sort of thing ; and, you see, I guessed what it was, and that she didn't like to be left behind alone, so I settled I would spend the day with her, and we'd have a lark together on our own account, and I've been doing the dutiful till now, when she has gone out driving with Lady Long. Thank goodness I hadn't got to do that too, for that would have just about finished me."

“But how good of you! how much obliged Kathleen must be to you.”

“Well, I don’t know about that,” and Sandy twirled his short cane rather vigorously. “The truth is I don’t care much about Goodwood, and she knows that, I dare say. Besides I’ve been to nearly everything else this year, the Derby, Ascot, Crewkerne, and all the lot of them; really I think I’m rather tired of the sort of thing. It would have been awfully jolly if I could have driven Kathleen over in Jumper’s dog-cart as I wished, but she only laughed at me when I proposed it. But didn’t you want to go—wouldn’t *she* let you?” asked he, glancing at her aunt as he spoke.

“No, but I should never have wished to go anyhow. Races arn’t at all in my way.”

“Arn’t they, why not? I’m sure you’re not really slow. You’d like it very much if you went.”

“Oh, I don’t know. I’m afraid I am

rather slow," and Sybil smiled a little sadly; for Sandy had often said in her hearing how much he preferred fast people to slow, "and you know I don't do anything of that kind."

"No, you hardly ever come on the pier, or do anything like other people. How do you amuse yourself all day?"

"I don't think I do amuse myself."

"But what do you do then? You must do something you know. Come now confess to me, you're all for confessions, arn't you—are you a ministering angel among the poor all the days I don't see you? Or are you going in for the 'blue,' reading Hebrew and learning all the Ologies?"

"Oh, a little of both, please let me do a little of both," said Sybil laughing.

"No, now not really. Well I always knew you were awfully good, and now I suppose you are awfully clever as well. By Jove, I'm quite frightened of you. Do you really read Hebrew?"

“No, really I don’t, nor am I a ‘ministering angel’ either.”

“But you said just now—”

“No, indeed, I was only joking.

“Anyhow you won’t tell me what you do. Well I suppose it is very rude of me to ask. Of course I have no right to, only somehow we’ve seen so much of each other lately, I forget sometimes we are not very old friends. You must forgive me if I’m too free and easy. It’s my way I’m afraid, I know I ought to mend it, but somehow directly I care about a person I forget I ought to be on my good behaviour—awfully stupid, isn’t it?”

“No, indeed,” said Sybil in a slightly tremulous voice, “and you are always on your good behaviour, as you call it, I should say. I don’t at all think you are free and easy, but it is so difficult for me to say what I do. There are some poor people I go and see, and I teach in the school most days, and then there’s Miss Morgan, I go to read to her, or write

letters for her, or do whatever she wants, and I read a good deal. But I've nothing regular to do besides that, except church of course. There's service every day. But this only takes up a little time, and it is so difficult to say what I do during the rest of the day."

"By Jove, I should be very sorry to do all that though. Fancy church, too, every day. Does your aunt make you go?"

"No, she doesn't go herself. But why will you always talk of my aunt in that way? I assure you she means to be very kind to me."

"Does she," said Sandy, rather doubtfully, then after a moment's reflection. "But do you mean to be a Sister of Charity by and by, or what's the use of all this? I am sure you can't do it for pleasure."

"No, not for pleasure," and Sybil looked sad again, and rather weary. "I suppose I do it because I think it right, but then there's nothing else for me to do, and I must do something, as you say."

Sandy did not quite see the force of this last speech, thinking Sybil must have about as much choice of occupations as other young ladies, whose time did not seem to be equally well occupied; but he was quite satisfied to remain in his original opinion, that Sybil Mordaunt was an awfully good little creature, so he changed the subject and went back to the Ologies which were rather haunting him.

“But arn’t you really blue at all? Kathleen told me you were so tremendously clever.”

“Do you think I seem blue?” asked Sybil, rather anxiously.

“No, indeed—that is—yes; I think you do a little. You see you are always so grave, and perhaps that makes you seem so,” said he, very anxious to explain away his awful accusation.

Sybil smiled sadly. “Yes, you see I have had a very different life to—to Kathleen now for instance. I was not always so grave though. But it is hard to be—”

she stopped abruptly, and then began again with sudden vehemence, "And oh, it is horrid being poor ! I should like to be rich."

"So should I," said Sandy, "I should think so, rather. But after all it isn't being rich makes a fellow happy. By Jove, Miss Mordaunt, though you wouldn't believe it perhaps, I think I'm the happiest fellow in the regiment, and I'm the poorest too. It isn't money after all that one wants most."

"No, it isn't money," said Sybil drearily. She realised then for the first time what that was which she had felt such a want of lately, and what too had so brightened bits of her life during the last few days, making the rest of it all the drearier by the contrast, and meanwhile Sandy went on with his own chain of thoughts, till at last he exclaimed :

"But I suppose money must have something to do with some people's happiness, or why is it every one seems to think Kathleen must marry a rich man ?"

“Do they?” and Sybil looked up with a perfectly calm face, and put away her own thoughts which had not been about Kathleen.

“Yes, at least every one I’ve heard speak about it, and you can’t fancy her happy married to a poor man yourself, now can you?”

“No, I don’t think I can; but it’s because I can’t fancy her poor at all. I could just as soon think of her as poor and happy, as poor and unhappy, couldn’t you?”

“Yes, by Jove. How well you put that; I never should have thought of that for myself. But now you say it, I really believe you are quite right, only I don’t understand why it is.”

“Nor do I; but somehow I think she would always seem rich. She has such a grand generous nature, so very different to other people. They all seem so mean and petty in comparison.”

“Oh, no, I don’t think that,” cried

Sandy with some warmth. "No, there I can't agree with you, though I love her better than any one else in the world." He spoke bluntly, thinking Sybil must know it well enough, and so having no shame in confessing it to her. "But that does not make me think worse of other people," and he laid a slight stress on the word 'other;' and his honest blue eyes tried very hard to look into Sybil Mordaunt's, but hers were steadily gazing on the ground, and only the flush on her usually pale cheek showed that she understood what he intended she should.

Oh, Sandy Beaumont, did you really think it kind to pay so much attention to this pale sad-looking girl, because no one else paid her any, and the only girl you cared about had gone to Goodwood? Did you really think it kind? Indeed I believe you did, you stupid Sandy, and that it never entered into your head to think that your kind words, and honest blue eyes, and merry winning ways might in the end

make those pale cheeks paler, and those sad eyes sadder.

"I believe you're the greatest friend Kathleen has," said Sandy. "I wish you were my friend, too, I should like to have some one who would speak of me behind my back as you do of her."

"You must deserve it then," said Sybil looking up, and trying to speak merrily, for she feared Sandy must find so much grave talk very tedious.

"Well, don't I?" he said, and this time his eyes succeeded in meeting hers, and her eyes as they just glanced up at him, and then looked down again, expressed very fully that she thought he did.

"Do let us swear a friendship, and date it from the Cup day at Goodwood. It will be such an easy date to remember. What is the ceremonial we ought to go through? Did you and Kathleen exchange vows, or what?"

"No, I don't remember that we did," and Sybil laughed. "We never settled

that we would be friends ; it came naturally somehow."

"I wish it would come naturally now. Can't you make it?"

"No, I couldn't make it. But I think it does come naturally. I know I shall always be your friend," and Sybil's cheeks burnt painfully, as she said this very quietly and firmly, but without daring to look up at him again.

"Come, my dear, we must be going," said her aunt, turning round to her at last, "Mrs. Villars is going up in this tram, and I am sure we had better go too. It is much too cold here for pleasure."

"Too cold for pleasure," repeated Sybil to herself half mechanically, as she got up to follow her aunt, her cheeks still on fire as it were. Sandy walked with them to the tram, and he pressed Sybil's hand rather longer than was quite necessary, as he handed her into it, saying, "Friends then for always, don't forget mind."

"I never forget," said Sybil, and sat

down in the tram looking back at him, as he walked away; and after a few steps he turned, and seeing her looking after him, took his hat quite off, and gave her one of his bonniest smiles, and Sybil's cheeks burnt more than ever, and for a moment or two a happy smile played round about her lips. But as she dressed for tea that night not a few silent tears rolled down her face, so few people were there to be kind to her now, and Sandy was so very kind and so very good. "Oh, how can Kathleen have cared to go without him to-day?" she wondered. "He is worth more than all her other admirers put together. Can it really be that she does not care for him, when he cares so much for her too." Then the tears rolled down again, and Sybil took herself very seriously to task, and succeeded in seeming almost merry as she talked to her aunt during the rest of the evening, feeling as if she had been very wicked not to have been more grateful to her, when she had offered to take her down

the pier, since it had been so very pleasant. Poor Sybil, she had been such a dearly loved petted child till lately, and now she was so very lonely in the world, and so unaccustomed to a loveless life that she turned greedily anywhere, where was the least semblance of love.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CUP DAY AT GOODWOOD.

“HAVE you been waiting down here all this time for us, you dear, stupid boy? Somehow we missed our train, and had to drive ever so far,” cried Kathleen, as she joined her cousin, who was standing waiting at the top of the pier steps to greet the race-goers on their return.

“Oh, M. Beaumont, *c’était charmant, parfaitement charmant*, we have so amused ourselves. The races have been ver good, ver good; all my horses won,” said Miss Zieri.

“Indeed, I’m glad to hear it. How many pairs of gloves?”

“Pairs of gloves,” she laughed out con-

temptuously. "A locket and a scent bottle, and six—eight—how many pairs of gloves, M. Simpson?"

"Oh, a dozen at the least, I should say."

"No, but you were to keep the count, you know you were to. But you are so *bête*—so *bête*. How many was it, M. De Veux?" asked she in tones that could hardly have been more imploring whatever the subject had been.

"Well, were the races good?" asked Sandy of De Lancey. "Of course the favourite won?"

"Oh, of course; but they really were the very poorest races I ever saw. Plantagenet's won a pretty lot though they say. I can't think whom he got to bet against him, for the other horses made no running at all."

"Then I am afraid you will not have formed a very good opinion of our English races, Mrs. Zieri."

"Yes—yes," said Mrs. Zieri who could

not understand English, while her daughter exclaimed :

“ Oh, we never looked at the horses. Mon Dieu, it's all the same thing. I've seen them run at Chantilly, and they always run all ver fast, and one is the favourite, and that is always my horse. Brown to-day, it was grey at Chantilly. No, brown there too ; always brown. That shall be my colour, who will wear my colours ? ”

Then there was a little chorus of “ I will,” from all the men of the party, while Sandy added : “ But I have not seen them yet. Mayn't I have a peep, Miss Zieri, at the most beautiful dress that appeared at Goodwood to-day ? That large cloak hides you entirely.”

“ Oh, you want to see my toilette, do you ? Well, you shall—if you will hold my cloak like one good boy. There—am I not *charmante* ? ”

“ Charming, indeed,” cried Sandy, with emphasis, whilst the little coquette stood

still for an instant on her wonderful pointed heels, then bursting into a peal of laughter, as she gathered round her the cloak which Sandy held to her as gingerly as if he were afraid of extinguishing her. She was as fresh and bright looking as when she started, and really it was difficult not to fancy her some changeling from fairy-land, as she stood there in her fantastic toilette, an orange silk petticoat, a primrose silk dress cunningly shortened over it by a peculiar graceful device known only to Miss Zieri, a fancifully shaped black lace peplum, falling over the primrose silk, a golden band clasping her tiny waist. Then though the body of the dress was orange again with tight fitting sleeves of the same, there was a tiny almost invisible jacket of the lighter silk and black lace with long hanging sleeves, and the two shades of yellow mingled and relieved each other in an almost incomprehensible manner, while the feathery golden hair partly looped up in a chignon, partly escap-

ing in curls seemed to gain brilliance from the yellow silk. On her head she wore two or three wreaths of autumn leaves tied on under her back hair by deep yellow strings, while the tiniest little white veil made believe to conceal her exquisitely chiselled features. Poor Sandy did not take in half these details, but he thought it the most wonderful and bewitching costume he had yet seen Miss Zieri in, and would have been dumb with astonishment, had she not so openly asked for his admiration.

If Christine Zieri had ever had a head to be turned, it might well have been turned by the admiration she had met with that day. Everyone had been asking who she was, every one, who had been able to be so, had been at her feet. Kathleen might have competed with her, had she been allowed colours and a Parisian costume, but confined to black and white, and a London milliner, she had no chance; besides, a bonnet never was so becoming to her as a hat, and somehow compared

with Miss Zieri's frothy vivacity, Kathleen's Irish merriment seemed almost heavy. Certainly Lord Faversham was her faithful admirer all day, but he seemed to be faithful almost by an effort, and Major De Lancey, though he might be said to devote himself more to her than any one, rather held aloof, cold and impassible. "So English he is," said Miss Zieri, and gave herself up to pleasing those she could please so easily. Mr. Simpson actually offered himself and his fortune in so many words, but in the excitement of captivating a new acquaintance on one side, and of hearing she had won a scent-bottle on the other, Miss Zieri had no chance of answering, and up to this time she had not given the matter a thought. As for Mr. De Veux, he had been quite fascinated by the little syren to the forgetfulness of Kathleen, Helen, every thing, and had been an abject slave all day, but without getting any reward, for Miss Zieri despised him utterly.

“ *N'est-ce pas que M. Simpson est beaucoup plus riche ?* ” she asked of Major De Lancey, and getting an affirmative, she asked again, “ *et lequel est le plus bête ?* ” and shrieked with laughter.

And now of course my readers will suppose that Kathleen was desperately jealous, and would be much incensed that Sandy, who had given up all the pleasures of the day for her, that Sandy also should devote himself to Miss Zieri as soon as he got a chance, and that, when she talked over the day alone with her mother and cousin, she would say something disparaging of the young lady, or repeat how that heavy swell, Ted Bulkeley of the Grenadiers, had asked her “ who that little actress was,” while staring at Miss Zieri through his gold eye-glass, and then drawled out, “ not pwoper though, I suppose.” But Kathleen did nothing of the kind ; somehow, I do not think she ever was jealous, whether it was as Sybil Mordaunt would have it, that she was too grand and

generous for anything of the kind, or whether as many people would have said, she knew it was not a politic failing to give way to, anyhow I never heard of her expressing any feeling of the kind, and this evening she talked of Miss Zieri by her Christian name, and said that she had quite lost her heart to her.

“And, mother, her get up was the very prettiest, most coquette thing possible. You should have seen it. It suited her down to the ground, didn’t it, Sandy?”

“It was very wonderful,” was that young man’s more artful than altogether honest reply. “She must have set the course on fire rather, didn’t she?”

“No, now that was just the beauty of her dress. It was not at all noisy. Now there was Lady Plantagenet there all in cherry colour—a lovely dress, and she looked very well in it; but it was fortunate it was a dull day, or people would have been afraid to go near her.”

“That Mrs. Courteney was there in something rather awful, De Lancey said,” interposed Sandy.

“Oh, she was in rose-coloured silk with that white lace cape she always wears, and a long white lace flounce, a trifle too *décolletée* certainly. But I happened to be standing near her, and really her neck looked too lovely through the white lace, such beautiful blue veins, and so well shaped too.”

“Oh, if you admire that woman!” grumbled Sandy. “One can see the paint standing on her cheeks, and as to her neck I dare say it’s all enamelled.”

“Oh, now Mrs. Stonman, she really is enamelled, and she had the loveliest satin dress on, I asked her where she had got it from, and she said quite loud, ‘Oh, one of my men gave it to me.’ Really I don’t believe she is respectable, she was there in a brake full of men.”

“What did make you go and speak to her then? Really, Kathleen, I wish you

would not do such things. Was Sir Henry with her as usual?"

"Yes, he was there, too, I think. But it's all right, is it not? they are going to be married soon?"

"Well, his wife may have something to say to that," said Lady Killowen testily.

"Oh, but I thought he was going to get a divorce, and they give out they are engaged always."

"They may give out what they like. But he'll never get a divorce, and she's not at all the sort of person I wish you to be seen with, Kathleen. You should not speak to such people, but you always do something of the kind if I am not with you."

"Yes, you ought to have gone too, mother. It's never any fun without you," she added caressingly, "I'm sure to-day I'd just as soon have stopped at home with you and Sandy."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know why you didn't then. I never asked you to go, I know. Very dull it's been for me all this

afternoon driving out with Lady Long and her daughter. I hate driving."

"Who do you think I've been scuffling with whilst you were away?" interrupted Sandy.

"Oh, who?" asked Kathleen, putting on an air of great interest. "I knew you must be up to some mischief, when you were so anxious to stay here. Well, which of those tall Miss Vivyens was it? Did you go to the top of the roundabout and look down with Grace, or sit at the bottom of the steps at the water's edge with Amy?"

"No, neither," laughed Sandy, "they've too many men hanging about them for me. No I've been talking away like five o'clock to your dear friend Sybil Mordaunt, a dear good little thing she is too, though she hasn't got a kick in her."

"What scuffling with Sybil! oh you very bad boy. I shall never forgive you, if you make her unhappy, and she takes every thing so seriously too, it isn't fair with her."

“Isn’t it? not much danger I’m afraid. But what makes her so serious though? Is she very poor, or what is it?”

“Oh how I have wasted my pity on you when you were so well employed! so it’s come to that already, has it? how much money has she? Well I’m sorry to tell you, that as your cousin, seriously, Sandy, I advise you to be cautious how you get entangled. I believe she’s almost entirely dependant on that aunt.”

“No, not really, by Jove. Poor girl! But how is it? I thought her father had a nice little place in Lancashire.”

“Yes, but that was entailed or something, anyhow I know it’s gone to a distant cousin. The father and mother died very suddenly within a fortnight of each other, and nothing was arranged properly about the money. Sybil never speaks of it at all, nor of them. I’ve never heard her mention her father or mother in any way, I think. It’s some time ago now, you know, but it was very dreadful at the time

I believe, and she hardly knew this aunt at all, or any of her relations. She'd always been abroad before, and I don't much fancy she likes England now."

"Poor girl, that's very sad for her. How very fond she is of you, Kathleen! we've been talking of you nearly all the afternoon. Well, I must be going now, or I shan't catch that horrid boat across. Good night, aunt," said he getting up. "Deary me, if it isn't actually raining."

"Your coat's in the hall, Sandy. You left it there the other night," and Kathleen was actually gracious enough to go out and find it for him.

"Well, you've had a jolly day, I hope, though you don't look very bright just now," said Sandy.

"I'm only tired, that's all. You haven't been very bored, have you, old boy?" asked she with her grand manner, handing him his coat as if it were the robe of some order of knighthood with which she was investing him.

“Oh I’ve managed to get on without you. Wonderful, isn’t it?” and snatching a cousinly kiss, “don’t pine away for me; I’ll be over here on Saturday again,” he said, and went out into the rain.

Kathleen was inclined to be sentimental, as young ladies often are after a long day’s enjoyment: “Dear old Sandy! there’s nobody like you,” said she to herself, and she actually brushed away a tear! “I wish you could change places with that dear silly Lord Faversham, and then I know what I’d do—I think I’d be able to forget that horrid Count then!” Horrid Count! oh Kathleen! “Well I suppose I shall have to marry soon; what a bore money is. Really Mrs. Lake is too bad, those horrid bills of hers have been running in my head all day, and now to find another impertinent letter when I come home. Why can’t she wait? of course I shall pay her some day, and I daren’t tell mother. She’d say I had been so extravagant, and it wouldn’t be any use either,

for she's hard up too, I believe, and to think it's all gone in horrid black crape, which nobody looks well in! Poor dear papa, as if it showed any feeling for him making a figure of oneself, and running up long bills! but the world seems to think it does. How do poor people go into mourning, I wonder. After all I believe though most of that bill is for the ball-dresses I took with me to Rome. I really thought I'd paid for them; it's most vexatious. I shall have to borrow from somebody though if she keeps on writing. I'm sure I wish some of my men would give me dresses like Mrs. Stonman's. It would be very convenient, and one only wears them to please the men after all. As for me, I'm sure I'd be just as happy if I'd only a cotton gown for summer, and a linsey for winter. It's only for the men one does it after all, and they really ought to pay for it. Heigh ho! I may as well go to bed, I suppose," and then she began her disrobing.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONCERT.

“THE slow sweet hours,” “the slow sad hours,” as the Laureate calls them, came and went for the good people at Ryde ; and they yachted, those of them who owned yachts, or had friends who owned them, and they played croquet a little, and sauntered on Ryde Pier a great deal, and the young people made love, and the older people—there are hardly any old people at Ryde, it’s not a place where they go—but those who didn’t make love, why they made remarks, and the bands played, and there was mingled with the snatches of conversation the tune of the last comic song, or selections from an opera, or

“Twilight Dreams,” or “Merry Tunes,” all just as it happened; and there were no great apparent changes in the society, only they all grew much more intimate, and consequently interesting to one another, and the tiny Miss Zieri was said to be engaged to the bulky Mr. Simpson, and Amy Vivyen received congratulations on the prospect of her soon becoming the third Mrs. Beauchamp.

The Cowes Regatta had taken place, and most of Ryde had gone to the Cowes ball, and mostly they had voted it not worth the trouble. Very pretty girls, very handsome men, beautiful jewels, and beautiful dresses; but there was no room to dance, and the supper was uneatable, and why one of the first clubs in the world should give its guests undrinkable wine, was as usual puzzling all those who had not as yet got accustomed to the idea, and now the Ryde Regatta was to come off, and the week was full of engagements. But on Monday there was nothing par-

ticular to do, so that night was fixed for the concert.

There had been sundry practisings for that, which have been left out in the short summary of what the good people at Ryde had lately been doing, for they had not been very interesting, nor very well attended. Kathleen had generally found she had some engagement which prevented her going; and Lord Faversham, who, to every one's surprise, had been suddenly found to be possessed of a not very powerful, but peculiarly sweet voice, would only undertake one solo, and that he seemed to prefer practising alone; so the two most distinguished amateurs deserting the practisings, the others tried to get through their drudgery as easily as they could, and were as tiresome as only amateurs about to sing at a concert, or take part in theatricals can be. At last the night arrived, and every one concerned as usual said, they were only looking forward to to-morrow morning when it would all be over.

The concert was held in the Town Hall that time, and a low stage was erected at one end for the singers. It was a pretty sight to see the young ladies, as they filed on to it, all dressed alike in white with blue ribbons and pink roses in their hair, and very beautiful indeed did Kathleen look, as she appeared first of all with the air of a prima donna, making now her first débüt at Ryde in colours. As she had to do that, she had further gratified herself by placing a pink coral comb in her golden plaits, and tying beads of the same round her white soft throat, and what with the pink roses and the fresh bright blue ribbons she had looping up her dress, and tying back her sleeves, she had quite as much colour as she required, and more than most people would have stood ; and she looked so bright and brilliant, that it was with difficulty people refrained from clapping her, as she advanced to the front of the platform. But somehow, no one quite knew how, a change came over her

soon, and then people voted that she did not look well in colours, and that it was only being always in black and white had made her so much admired, and they sneered also at her standing up there to look well, they supposed; they did not hear her voice, and for their part they did not believe she was singing at all. Of course she was asked to take a part, because it sounded well to have the Honourable Kathleen O'Grady, but they did not believe she could sing, and it was too absurd of her to pretend to. That was during the first part, then came the interval, during which every one who cared to, went into another room to have tea and coffee. Lord Faversham had taken Kathleen in; he had been like her shadow lately, and she flirted with him, and laughed at him, and amused herself with parading his passionate devotion before the still too insensible De Veux, and the other men who were but half-and-half admirers, without troubling herself to consider what the effect

might be on the pretty boy earl himself. He was now fetching her some coffee, when she looked up and saw a tall slight man with a distinguished foreign air standing beside her, with a cup of *café noir*, heaping sugar into it, as he gazed at her with large dark eyes, that she knew but too well :

“ *Questo lei piaccia, signorina mia, così ? Mi sono bene ricordato, non è vero ?* ” said he in his low distinct thrilling tones.

If Kathleen had been pale before, the colour now came back abundantly over face and neck and arms, and for a moment she was choked, then with a grander manner even than usual she took the coffee from him :

“ No, you have not forgotten my taste in coffee, I see. Thanks, Count,” she said in French, and in her nervousness she laughed a pretty low gurgling laugh as she spoke.

“ *Mais vous, Mademoiselle, vous ne parlez plus Italien ?* ” and his eyes seemed penetrating her inmost thoughts ; those eyes

which Kathleen had said to herself, she could not resist, never could, so it was no use trying. But she did try now bravely, and answered again in French :

“ Oh, I never could speak Italian, you know, and it is so long ago now. How long ago that time at Rome seems—like another life almost.”

“ Another life ! and you live in this one now ?” and again his eyes seemed searching out her inmost thoughts.

“ Thanks, Lord Faversham ; but Count Manfredi has just given me some coffee. Too bad of me to take it, wasn't it ? But do drink that yourself now, to fortify yourself for the song of the night. You can't think how I am longing to hear it,” and she smiled on him, and then against her will almost, her eyes were drawn to meet those of the Count, which had now assumed a mournful expression, as if to reproach her for her neglect of him, her old friend, who was now a stranger in her country, as she had once been in his,

when they had begun to be friends. And Kathleen hated and despised herself, why could she not give him a cordial welcome, as she would so gladly have done? "This pretended indifference, of course he sees through it, and thinks I've been breaking my heart for him. Oh! why can't I be ordinarily friendly!" but she could not, and yet all through that concert she had been thinking what she would say to him, ever since she had first caught sight of him in one of his carelessly graceful attitudes near the door, his dark eyes fixed on herself, and now she could say nothing, only as Lord Faversham was about to conduct her back to her place among the performers, she half looked up and said: "But what has brought you to England, Count? I never expected to see you here."

"You here, and you ask me! oh, Mademoiselle!" and Kathleen shivered as she felt rather than met his glance.

"Are you cold!" asked the unconscious

Lord Faversham. "Let me fetch you a cloak, do," and he gave her a look, which passionate though it was, was but as water after wine, compared to those with which the Count had been favouring her; and the Count looked after them, and stroked his long black moustache, and murmured to himself "*elle m'adore.*" He generally spoke in French, rarely if ever in English, and only using Italian to English people on special occasions, such as when he first came up to Kathleen. Now he went to look for Lady Killowen, to see if he was still as firmly fixed in her good graces as in those of her daughter; as for Kathleen "*elle m'adore,*" it was easy enough for him to see that.

The second part of the concert Kathleen rather regained her good looks, and she sang too sweetly enough, though not very correctly perhaps; but she did not look quite herself till Lord Faversham's song began. He went to the front of the platform, and after a little nervous trifling

with the pages of his music began in a low, but sweet and exquisitely true voice, "Kathleen Mavourneen." Everyone was taken by surprise, for it had been kept a profound secret what the song was to be, even from Kathleen herself, and now everyone looked at her to see how she took it; and amongst all the eyes turned towards her, Kathleen felt two large piercing dark eyes, and she looked happy and beautiful once more, though nearly overpowered with blushes, and people were quite pleased with her. She would have looked yet better perhaps, if she had not blushed quite so much, but then it was so nice to see she was so modest and unspoiled by all the admiration she met with. When he finished, Lord Faversham was tremendously clapped and encored, and in the general excitement a great many people did not quite know whether they were applauding him or Kathleen, but they were equally pleased whichever it was. Lord Faversham however would not take the encore, he seemed quite con-

fused by the applause, and, after a good many shy bows, took refuge behind Kathleen's chair, looking anxiously at her to see if she were pleased or not.

"How beautifully you sang it!" whispered she, speaking to him over her shoulder, and only just turning her head sufficiently to be able to smile on him an irresistible smile. "I never thought my name sounded half so pretty before. I shall quite love it now after your song. Thanks so many."

Lord Faversham looked proud then, blushing ten times more too than he had blushed before, and he tried to say something but failed, only looking a great deal, and Kathleen's answering look was very sweet, "But you must sing something more, or the people will never be satisfied."

"Faversham, Faversham, you really must come forward again. You must take the encore. Sing anything else you like if you don't want to repeat your last song, but

you must sing something," said that leader of the Ryde world, who had benevolently undertaken the management of the concert.

"Oh do !" said Kathleen.

"But what—what?" asked the boy earl, looking more perplexed almost than gratified.

"Oh anything ; no matter so that you sing something. 'God save the Queen,' if you like."

"That song the air of which you were humming as we came back from Goodwood the other day," said Kathleen.

"Oh, *that* song !" and Lord Faversham looked delighted. It was the song of all others he would most have wished to sing to Miss O'Grady if he had dared, and now she herself bade him sing it. He had practised it often with the performer on the piano, with whom he had been great friends lately, so there was no difficulty about the accompaniment, and he went forward again to the front of the platform,

looking both proud and pleased, and yet delicate as he was, like all those of his race, and only now sent to idle away his time at Ryde for the sake of its fresh sea breezes, he had been rather nervous of trying even one song in such a large crowded room, and now did not know how he was possibly to get through another; but she herself had bade him sing, the lady of his love, and if that did not give him courage, what could? so he went forward bravely with the colour burning high on his fair delicate cheek. They were all friendly to him more or less, those people he was going to sing to, and many of them even would have called themselves his friends, and they looked kindly on the slight boyish figure, and proudly smiling face with its bright blue eyes which took away the attention from the light brown lustreless hair. Their hair was never a strong point with the Favershams, and for many generations it had been a distress to the younger members of the family, in-

deed to all it may be said, for the Favershams never lived to grow old. The present Earl's father had died at thirty, and his father had never reached forty, and he had succeeded his brother, and so it had gone on for a long time, whilst the Faversham eyes got more and more known for their brilliance, and their hair still remained a vexation to them. That voice of the present Earl's was no inheritance in the family ; he got it direct from his mother, and though sweet and true as hers, it had already grown far less powerful descending to a Faversham born. He had stipulated he was to sing only one song, knowing well that his voice would not hold out at concert pitch for more, but now there was no help for it, and Kathleen herself had told him what to sing, so he began with a good heart :

“Aime moi bien, je t'en conjure,
Je n'ai plus de foi qu'en ton cœur ;
Le baume guérit la blessure,
L'amour guérit la douleur.”

So far he sang better than he had sung before, for he had been nervous during the beginning of "Kathleen Mavourneen," and though he had taken courage as he went on, he had not been able to put so much passion into it, as he put now into this song, but during the next verse he began to break down.

"Laisse moi l'espoir qui m'enivre,
C'est là mon unique soutien;
Et pour m'aider encore à vivre
Aime moi bien, aime moi bien."

There was a gasp between those last two "*aime moi bien's*" and people all began to have an intense indescribable longing for him to end there, and as he paused for an instant trying to regain his breath, they clapped loudly. He might very well have made that his finale, but it did not occur to him; he was wrapped in the thoughts the song suggested to him, and as the music went on, so did he too as soon as he got back his voice, though the

first words were quite lost if they were ever sung.

“Je t'aimerai comme l'abeille
Aime la fleur qui gît son miel ;
Comme l'oiseau l'aube vermeille,
Comme l'étoile aime le ciel ;

“Je t'aimerai comme ma mère,
Et ton nom à côté du sien
Sera placé dans ma prière,
Aime moi bien, aime moi bien.”

Then there was a little feeble clapping, and after a short pause for consideration, much more vigorous applause, and Lord Faversham walked back to his old seat, feeling faint and giddy, and covered his face with his hands, struggling to get back that breath, which felt now as if it never would come back, and Kathleen fancied she heard a sob, and she felt as if she would have given anything to turn round and smile on the poor boy, as she had smiled before, and comfort him ; but she could not.

Lord Faversham's voice had grown quite

husky before he got through the third verse, and he had seemed almost choking as he began again "*Je t'aimerai*," but then he made a great effort, and his voice had rung out clear again though very thin. Only as he got to the last line it died away in a long low despairing wail, "*Aime moi bien, aime moi bien*," and all the impressionable people who heard it, felt as if they could never forget it, and fancied that those words would haunt them ever after. Even Sandy who had been devoured with a fierce fever of jealousy at first, hung his head and blushed at his own bad nature, and felt a kindlier feeling towards Lord Faversham than he had ever felt before, and they had always been good friends. Whilst Count Manfredi who was one of the impressionable ones brushed away a tear or two, as he muttered "*poverino*" and went a little further through his verb, for he now thought "*il l'adore*," and for the moment almost wished he could change "*elle m'adore*" into "*elle l'adore*;" but he

was too much a man of the world to wish impossibilities long, so contented himself with feeling very soft-hearted to the fair young English boy.

“He rather broke down in that,” said De Veux to Lady Killowen. “It’s absurd clapping him so much, when he must know he sang it very badly.”

“That’s just the sort of singing I like,” said Lady Killowen. “I can’t see the sense of all that operatic music where the words seem to go for nothing. I like Lord Faversham’s singing better than anyone’s, and I like his second song best. But, poor boy, some one will have to love him very much to help him to live. He’ll go off like all the other Favershams. I never saw that delicate look in him so strong before to-night. Is there another brother, I forget?”

“Yes,” said Sandy, who was listening, “he’s got a brother in the Eton eleven, I know that, and a capital long stop he makes too.”

“ Oh then, it’s all right” said Lady Killowen. “ Only I should be sorry for his mother, if there weren’t ; her jointure is a wretched one. But now it doesn’t so much matter.”

A great many people were singing a glee while these remarks went on, and when that was finished the good-natured manager, Mr. Kinnaird, went up to Lord Faversham and asked him how he was. “ That last song was rather too much for you, I’m afraid. Come and get a glass of wine. I have some capital sherry outside,” and Lord Faversham went and had some sherry, and then he said he was still very tired, he thought he would rather not wait till the end of the concert, so he went away by himself looking very pale and sorrowful, in spite of all attempts to cheer him ; and Mr. Kinnaird wished he could have gone home with him, he did not half like the boy’s look, and he half thought of sending for Major De Lancey, who was somewhere in the concert-room, and

coming from the same part of the country rather took young Faversham under his protection ; but there was a general outcry for him, and he had to go back to his evening's duties. As he passed by Kathleen, he just said to her, " Lord Faversham has gone home, he did not feel very well. I am afraid that second song was too much for him !" Kathleen felt grateful for his kind thought in telling her this ; she was really frightened about the poor boy, and as that despairing "*Aime moi bien, aime moi bien,*" rang in her ears, again and again did she wish that it were possible.

" Oh, if she could but do so, he was such a dear simple boy !" and she now for the first time had realized how much he would give for her love. " Such a good match as it would be too !" she thought, he was too young for her ; but that was the only drawback, otherwise it would be such a suitable match. But she did not love him, not the least bit in the world, though she wished she could, and as she

thought of the last words of that song, she felt that he knew she didn't. What had opened his eyes to it, she could not guess, for she did not think he would have sung "Kathleen Mavourneen" as he had done if he had been sure that his love was not returned, and then she thought of that one sob she had heard, and pictured to herself what he must be feeling now, and she was not sparing of the colours she laid on in that picture—what young lady would have been under such circumstances? and interweaved with her thoughts came the recollection of those debts which were beginning to keep her awake at night now; for she could not imagine what to do about them, and then there came to her a vision of the Faversham estate, which was always being kept for minors, and was so peculiarly unembarrassed now. Then if young ladies ever do such things, I think Kathleen may be said to have cursed the Count Manfredi in her heart. "He is worthless—oh! I know he is worthless, and he

doesn't care for me, I know he doesn't, and Lord Faversham is a good honest boy, and he loves me, and why do I care for one, and not the other?"

She longed for the concert to be over, and yet she dreaded the going away when she would have to speak to the Count again, and as she sat there listening to the music, each air that she heard then, seemed as if it would be hateful to her from that day forward. But when it came to "*Il balen del suo sorriso*," it was really unendurable; she had been looking down at her bouquet picking it to pieces hitherto. Sandy had sent for it from Covent Garden for her, and she had given him a good lecture for his extravagance, instead of thanks, when she had accepted it, but it had been very useful to her that evening, during great part of which she had been industriously destroying it. Now, however, even that would not do. "*Il balen del suo sorriso*." She looked up half-maddened, and met the Count's eyes, of course. But he did not

smile, he was watching her much as the cat watches the mouse that it is preparing to kill, but is amusing itself with first for a little.

As the Count put on her cloak for her that evening, with that little delicate pressure he knew so well how to administer in the process, he was again like the cat, or perhaps the tiger would be a more appropriate simile for him. "You recollect that night at the Opera, I see—even in this new life. Ah, Mademoiselle, you have never forgotten Rome, I know you haven't."

"I was very happy there," she said, looking up at him with tearful eyes.

"And very cruel," he said, then looking round into her face, he added "and you go on being cruel still. Do those beautiful eyes shed no tears for the victims? '*Le baume guérit la blessure, l'amour guérit la douleur!*' Mais, bon soir, et dormez bien, dormez toujours bien, chère demoiselle."

Then as he stood by the door of the car-

riage, while Sandy was getting in, and De Veux taking leave, the Count took out his cigar-case, and placing a cigar in his mouth, he drew from some part of it a faded flower. “*Ne m’oubliez pas,*” he said with an impassioned look from his dark eyes at Kathleen. Then they drove off, and leaning back in a corner of the carriage, Kathleen thought of her last ride at Rome, and some Forget-me-nots the Count had gathered for her, and then had insisted on her giving back one of them to him, and how pleased she had been to do so, and how he had kissed it, and vowed he would never part with it, and this was the first time she had seen him since, and it was so long ago, and all this time she had heard nothing of him, and she would have cried if she had been alone. “Oh he is a cruel, cruel flirt, nothing else, I know,” she said to herself; telling herself that the Count did not care for her, but only for Mrs. Courteney. Southsea and Ryde were very near together, and of course he had

come to England to see Mrs. Courteney, and had only chanced to meet her, Kathleen, at this concert. Then she thought of Lord Faversham, and wondered if he would come to think of her in the same way that she thought of the Count, and wished she had never flirted with him. "I really will never flirt again," she vowed to herself.

"You did not look at all well to-night, Kathleen; you were too pale, and then you got a great deal too flushed," said Lady Killowen.

"Did I? I am very sorry, mother, but really I could not help it."

"Certainly, the Count is a devoted admirer. I never thought he would follow you to England, and he says he's only just arrived. I wish you had looked better for his first time of seeing you."

"Oh, I don't care about that at all," said Kathleen impatiently. "But I know I must have looked horrid."

"I know somebody who didn't think so," said Sandy.

“You mean yourself, I suppose, but you always have such bad taste.”

“Have I? but somebody else had bad taste too to-night, if it was bad taste to admire you Kathleen. Now I shan’t tell you who it was, as I suppose it would be sinking the poor fellow for ever in your opinion.”

“How silly you are, but I’m sure it wouldn’t interest me at all to hear. What a bore this concert has been to be sure; it’s a mercy it’s over.”

“Perhaps it would have been a mercy for some people if it had never begun,” said Sandy, very gravely, for he had caught up Lord Faversham half way down Union Street, as he was going home to his hotel, and the poor boy had poured out his sorrows to him. “Oh, Beaumont! she’s your cousin, and I ought not to say it perhaps, but she has not been fair to me. Why did she always seem to like me? And I love her so much, and I know she will never care for me now. I saw it

directly I began to sing that song, which I couldn't—"and then the poor boy's voice broke down in a sob, and Sandy consoled him as well as he could, and just got back to the concert to see his aunt and cousin home, as he had promised. Lady Killowen would never have forgiven him if he had omitted that duty, and it was not a very unpleasant one; but Sandy did feel sorry for Lord Faversham, and he thought he had been rather hardly used, for he knew as well as the boy earl now did, that there was no hope for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW.

TUESDAY, the first day of the Ryde Regatta was a dismal depressing day, with little spurts of rain, which each time they came gave a promise of cooling the air, but never did so. The yachts were to start at 10.30 a.m., and a good many people assembled on the Pier to see them off, regardless of the disagreeable weather.

“It will be a poor race this year, the wind may drop any moment,” said young Long, looking seaward with the air of a man who knew all about it.

“Confound the wind. But the ‘Flora’ ’ll make a breeze for herself, whatever the

others may do," said the heavy Mr. Simpson, glorious in true yachting get up, the oldest and most threadbare looking of serge suits, still retaining the correct shape, however, owing to its Morgan build, and the most enormous of pearl pins fastening his necktie, speaking with more energy than was usual to him. "I say, Faversham, are you coming, or are you not? I'm off anyhow."

"Oh, I suppose I'm coming," said the young Earl listlessly.

"Arn't you going to ask me, Simpson? Well, hang it, I won't stand upon ceremony anyhow. There take care of the grub—wouldn't tread upon that on any account. Your toes! quite a different matter, old fellow. Shove off now, I'm all right," and Teddy Long sprang after the other two into the yacht's boat regardless of Lord Faversham's:

"I say, Teddy, nobody asked you. Go where you're wanted, old fellow."

"I've asked myself," said Teddy "and

there's nobody whose invitation I've ever half so much pleasure in accepting. By jove, Simpson, you are a good fellow. It's devilish hot in spite of this rain, and that ice is just the thing. Champagne's all right, is it not? You're not going to do us with sparkling Moselle, like that fellow Brandon? Catch me going out in his schooner again."

"Well, you'll see if it is Moselle, or not?" said Simpson with a smile of pride, for he specially piqued himself on his champagne. "Perhaps you'll call it Gooseberry. I know what it's cost me, that's enough for me."

"Oh hang what it cost you, what does that signify? It hasn't cost me anything, I know that. I say, Faversham, you're in love; you've let the something or other gnaw your damask cheek with a vengeance, my boy. Now look at me, I'm as fit as a fiddle, and I'm in love with a monstrous fine girl too."

"Tell us her name, Teddy. Here we

are, you'd better get on board first, Faversham. There now isn't she a beauty?" This was said of the 'Flora,' not of a rather pasty faced young lady sitting in her stern, glorious in ideal yachting get up, whose name was also 'Flora' by the way.

"There they go," said Sandy, gazing intently at the yachts through double glasses from the Pier. "Hasn't the 'Flora' jumped out with the lead? rather! I can fancy, Simpson, how big he'll be talking. Why the 'Esprit' isn't starting after all."

"No, only five are going to race," said Major De Lancey. "Have you to be back for parade this afternoon, Beaumont! Come over in the one o'clock boat then, with me. Good morning, Miss Zieri, I'm astonished to see you so early. The yachts are only just started, and I thought you never breakfasted till twelve."

"Oh, mon Dieu, how you mock at me! *Dites donc*, M. Sandy," Miss Zieri was never quite clear about Kathleen's cousin's

name. "Who is the favourite? who will win?"

"Impossible to say, I'm afraid. But I'd back the 'Flora' sooner than any thing. If the wind drops, which there is every chance of its doing, she's safe to come in first. Oh! here's the rain again. You'd better take shelter at once, hadn't you?" and so the morning passed away, the people on the shore every now and then getting greatly excited over the race, and then for long times, in between, quite forgetting it, and the people in the yachts, as what breeze there was died away, beguiling the time as best they could by cigars, and a large *et cetera*.

The Count Manfredi also went across in the one o'clock boat, and was very good friends with Sandy, whose acquaintance he had made the evening before, calling him "*mon cher*," and offering him cheroots, which he boasted were superior to any to be got in London. Sandy, like a true British bull-dog as he was, waxed indignant at this,

and, as he smoked the cigar, depreciated it with true insular politeness, by which the Count being in a generally courteous mood seemed no wit discomforted, but handed another of his treasures to Major De Lancey, calling upon him to express his opinion.

“A perfect cigar,” said Major De Lancey with the quiet well assured manner of a connoisseur, and Sandy, who was not at his ease in French, and had already taken a dislike to the Count, which prejudiced him against his cigar, went forward, and enjoyed it by himself.

“Perfect you call it, yet M. Sandy does not like it,” and the Count smoked, as he spoke, with an air of perfect enjoyment.

“Young men are no judges, and Beaumont seems put out by something this morning.”

The Count was looking down meditatively, he started now, turning away. “Is not Sandy his name?” he asked nonchalantly.

“Miss O’Grady calls him so, but his

real name, his family name, is Beaumont."

"A common name in England, is it not," asked the Count somewhat contemptuously.

"No, not what I should call a common name. He is very well connected too, though his father unfortunately ran through all his money. This young fellow's a very different sort."

"Ah, indeed!" said the Count, in the same indifferent tone, as if the subject rather bored him, and he only continued it through politeness. "*Voilà*, how slowly those yachts go; a pity they are not all steamers! So this young man is well connected, you say?"

Major De Lancey felt as if he was being pumped. He had no objection to telling all that he knew about Sandy; but then the Count Manfredi must ask him more direct questions; so he only gave a slight sound of assent.

"I knew one of that name once, you would oblige me much if you could make

me know whether this young man were a relation of his." This was said with that profoundly courteous manner, that very few men ever venture to assume with another man, but which, when they do assume it, always makes the man to whom it is addressed, feel as if he were somewhat of a bear, and must, indeed, make a desperate exertion to raise himself to the other's level. Major De Lancey hastened to give all the information in his power.

"It is very likely you may have known this young fellow's father himself. Charlie Beaumont, as people always called him, was a good deal abroad. There was some story of his assisting an Italian lady, at least an English girl, who was married to an Italian, and was unhappy with him, and bringing her back to her own people. Did you ever hear of it?"

"*Mais oui*—long ago ! So that was this young man's father." He was knocking off the ash of his cigar into the sea, with his back turned towards his companion,

then resuming his former position, and smoking calmly, he said: "Some people said he did not leave her with her own people after all."

"I don't know about that. She died soon afterwards, I believe. Poor thing!"

The Count, too, seemed to compassionate her, for he murmured a "*malheureuse*!" between his shut teeth.

"That cigar was better than I thought," said Sandy rejoining them. "No, thanks—not another," as the Count drew out his cigar case, and handed it to him, saying.

"You will have a second then, *tenez*." Perhaps the man coming round giving tickets and asking for money, startled him at this moment, or perhaps his hand shook; no matter, he dropped it, and one or two of the priceless cheroots rolled about the deck. He stooped to pick them up, but he did not observe a faded flower that had also fallen out.

"Some dear souvenir, Count," said

Sandy picking it up, and handing it to him with a smile.

How well the Count knew that careless good-humoured smile ; he laughed a low musical laugh. It was strange that he treated the world so rarely to it, seeing that he could laugh so well. “ Dear ! yes these souvenirs do indeed cost us dear. Did your fair cousin never bestow such a favour upon you,” and he tossed the flower in among his cigars.

Sandy’s cheeks burnt, and he made no attempt to conceal his annoyance, but the Count did not appear to notice it, and laughed on under his breath, as it were. After all it was not a pleasant laugh. Major De Lancey stood by puzzled ; he had liked this foreigner well enough at first, but he began now to feel a sort of distrust of him, and was just as glad to be arrived at South-sea, where the Count was going to land.

“ You seem rather down this morning, Beaumont,” he said to his young companion after they themselves had reached

Portsmouth, and landed there, the silence between them having been unbroken up to this time. "Has anything happened to you?"

"No, nothing—I'm all right," said Sandy rather impatiently. "But—I say, De Lancey, did you see Faversham this morning?"

"No, did you?"

"No, I only came down the pier after he'd gone. But I went to look him up last night, after I'd seen my aunt and cousin home, and—I suppose I'm a fool—but it makes me quite squeamish yet to think of it."

"Why—not hæmorrhage, you don't mean?" asked the other with a sudden knowledge that he did mean it.

"That's just it," said Sandy, "and you know they're all a seedy lot, and he won't see a doctor. He'll be kicking the bucket before he knows where he is, and the worst of it is, he says he don't care. But I promised not to tell, so you won't go talk-

ing of it in Ryde?" said Sandy looking up alarmed.

"That's not much my way."

"No; so I thought, there couldn't be any harm in telling you. But I wish he'd go home, or write for some one. Hollo, Briggs, you're a duffer, you are! Sawing at Fairy Queen's mouth in that way. Give her her head, and she's as gentle as a lamb, only give her her head," and Sandy began patting and soothing the refractory horse till she quieted down, much to Briggs' surprise and delight; for he, being mounted for almost the first time, and finding nothing else but the bridle to hold on to, had been holding on to that like grim death, and all the more so that Fairy Queen plunged and snorted, tossing her head, and dashing the white foam about.

During that afternoon's parade, Sandy's account of Lord Faversham's state of health and mind kept running in De Lancey's head. "That's a bit of Miss O'Grady's work," he said to himself, as the refrain of that French

song came back to him again and again. "He's been hard hit, poor boy; he must go away, and have some one to look after him, for he'll never do it for himself. The more scorched a silly moth is, the greater hurry is it in to throw itself altogether into the flames, and it will be just the same with this foolish fellow. I think I'll write to his mother myself, and tell her of this attack. That will bring her down at once, if she's at all the woman I take her for. I only hope I shan't frighten her out of her wits," and so after parade Major De Lancey went straight to his room, and wrote to Lady Faversham, not even taking off his uniform till he had done so.

When Count Manfredi landed on the little Southsea Pier, his face already wore a very different expression to the calmly courteous one he had preserved during the voyage. It seemed as if a dark cloud had passed over him, and his black eyes were really terrible, with a lurid light shining out of them. It was a sad story, the story

of the Count Manfredi's life. Taken in comparison with other Italian young noblemen, his contemporaries, he might once have been called a very promising young man. No genius, but clever undoubtedly, and with a great power of concentrating himself on whatever he had in hand; ambitious too, he really loved his country then, and did not only toy with poetical imaginations as to her future. With chivalrous manners, well formed, and goodly to look at, being then unmarked by the dark traces guilt and dissipation leave behind them, it was no wonder, when he fell in love with a young and beautiful English girl, that she returned his love. But she was an only child and an heiress, and though hitherto indulged in every whim, this time her parents withstood her wishes; they would hear of no marriage with a foreigner and Roman Catholic. The spoilt beauty took her wilful way; whatever doubts she might have had, as to whether she really loved the Count Manfredi, were

all dissipated by the opposition she met with, which irritated as much as it surprised her. It was not long before the Count's burning words made her consent to an elopement, and her consent once obtained, his ready ingenuity quickly got over all other difficulties. They were married, and then she wrote for forgiveness, not doubting she would obtain it. But her father and mother were too deeply wounded by her ready abandonment of them; they said they would forgive her, but they left Italy, refusing to see her, or have any further communication with her.

Then this petted English beauty had to accustom herself alone and unguided to all the Italian ways in which her husband had been brought up; he would willingly have surrounded her with English comforts, but he did not even know what they were. Cut off suddenly from her old friends and associations, she soon found that her husband's love, passionate

though it was, did not make up to her all that she had given up for it. She sought distraction in society, and there talked and behaved, as young English ladies do talk and behave, but as Italians do not, and the Count hovered jealously round her. By degrees this grew more and more unbearable to her, till she got to hate him and his large dark eyes. Then there appeared that merry, haphazard, good-natured ne'er-do-weel Charlie Beaumont, only six month's a widower, and considerably out at elbows, but as ready for a lark, or for any act of kindness as ever he was. The beautiful young Countess poured out to him her griefs and her wrongs. Charlie advised throwing herself upon the mercy of her own people, and for the second time she consented to a secret flight, if Charlie would this time be her companion. Neither of them considered the compromising nature of the position till retreat was impossible, and when she got back to her old home, at first she

saw no cause to regret her rash step, for her father's and mother's hearts had long since melted towards her, and they received her warmly, and without reproaches.

But the neighbourhood looked coldly on her, and thus being cut off from the society of those by whom she had been used to be courted as an heiress and a beauty, wounded her to the quick, and Charlie Beaumont was the only person who came from the outer world, and treated her with the loyal devotion she had once been accustomed to claim as a right, and he came again, and again. At last she went away once more with him. Then her father and mother shut up the old house for a time, and went away too, and when they came back, it was in deep mourning, and they said that she was dead, and no one knew anything about this second going away with Charlie, and they believed that she had been hardly tried, and that the Italian Count

had been a villain, and that their own harsh judgment, added to her other sorrows, had hurried her to an early grave, and they did all that lay in their power now to comfort the declining years of the poor afflicted father and mother.

All this time the Count Manfredi seemed to take no steps to gain information of any kind about his wife, but he knew well enough what went on ; he knew of that second going away, and he knew of her parents' death one soon after the other, and how she dared not claim the money that was now hers by right, but for very shame connived at the falsehood of her own death, receiving under a feigned name the annuity they had begun allowing her during their life time, and how that annuity did not cover the spendthrift Charlie's expenses, and how he was careless and neglectful of her, and how she hardly sorrowed, when one day the news was brought home to her that he had been dangerously hurt in a steeple-chase, and there

was little hope of his recovery. Poor Charlie Beaumont! such a good fellow as he had been all his life, and yet no one mourned for him at his death, unless it were the young son he had never seen for years, who had just got his commission, and hoped one day to make his father proud of him. The Count knew all about it somehow, and he knew what no one else except herself knew, that his wife of long ago, who was still his wife, though they had not met, nor written a line to each other, nor acknowledged each other in any way for the last fifteen years; that she was still alive, living now in a pretty little villa on the banks of the Thames. He knew this; had it not been for this secret, which no one knew but himself and herself, he would not have hesitated to make Kathleen O'Grady his wife, when he first knew her so young, so beautiful, and so loving, that winter at Rome. Sometimes the temptation was very great to him, for there was no one to say that his first wife was still alive, but

then Lord Killowen died, and events so turned out, that he did not fall under that temptation. He was not in love with Kathleen, not as he had once been, but he regretted her, and in spite of his many victims, his heart was still soft enough for him to grieve at thinking what she must suffer. But then there arrived the beautiful Mrs. Courteney with a reputation. Such a reputation! the Count was just in want of such a distraction; she came to Rome with a reputation, that was doubtful—there should be no doubt about it when she left Rome. This was before he saw her. When he managed to meet her, and he was not long about this, he was startled. It was not her beauty, nor her scornful expression that surprised him; no, it was her likeness to the wife of his early youth.

It was this likeness, which in spite of paint, of the general look of bad style, of the difference in expression, in spite of all this made the Count Manfredi turn

pale when he first saw Mrs. Courteney. A feeling of horror came over him that this was what his wife might have grown into, and then he laughed at himself that, man of the world as he was, he should be so simple as to have still thought of her as the young innocent creature she used to be, and his scheme came back to him, and he thought that this was the sort of scheme people might freely indulge in now with the Rosa of his early days. Then he was introduced to Mrs. Courteney, and made love to her, and took no care of her, as he had done of Kathleen, that she should be as little compromised as possible, for the feelings with which he regarded the two were quite different.

That love of his for his wife of long ago must, indeed, have been intense, that the faint likeness to her in Ada Courteney should have such influence over him; it was an influence that the Count was powerless to resist, and it chafed him that she should still be as cold and scornful to his words of love,

as the Rosa of long ago had been, before she fled from him with Charlie Beaumont. Now he had followed her to England, for Captain Courteney had burnt that letter forbidding him to do so, and he was going to renew his acquaintance with her, having just parted from Sandy Beaumont, the son of the man who had in his opinion done him the greatest wrong that it was possible for one man to inflict upon another; though all the while it had been one of the hapless Charlie's best impulses that had originally led him to protect the unfortunate young Countess in her flight to her parents.

The vengeful passions of Italians are proverbial, and the Count's thoughts, that had been all of love, had now received this turn, and he tasked his brains to devise some ingenious scheme. It was no case for daggers or stilettoes, nor was there any pretext for a duel. They were in England, and the Count was a man of the world, of the nineteenth century, and

Sandy was but the son of the man who had warped his life for him, but were it anyhow in his power to turn Sandy's cup of life into such bitterness, as his own had once been turned into, there were no pains he would have spared to accomplish this object. In what point was Sandy likely to be most sensitive? "Of course," argued the Count to himself, "he is in love with his beautiful cousin, who calls him Sandy, and treats him almost, yet not quite, like her brother. Shall I take her from him? marry her? or at least pretend to do so!" and the Count laughed bitterly to himself. "Shall I madden her? make her miserable? why she would but take refuge with this cousin of hers. Fool that I am!" and then he murmured to himself "*elle m'adore*," and felt that he could never have said that with equal truth of the lost Rosa.

He had taken a carriage, being too wise to trust himself unguided in the Southsea labyrinth of unfinished roads,

and now he found himself at the Courteney's door, and with his usual good fortune, heard that she was at home and alone. Mrs. Courteney received him with her usual coldness, and did not from any vague feelings of politeness, conceal the fact of her having written to him, or gloss over in what terms she had done so. But the Count refused to believe in the existence of the letter, till he had heard what had become of it, and when Mrs. Courteney gave him what account she could of it, he took the full advantage this little incident gave him. Mrs. Courteney had been very miserable in these last days; since she had insisted on going to Goodwood with Major O'Connor, and without her husband, there had been hardly any intercourse between them. Her husband came and went in silence, and had more frequent recourse to the gin bottle, and Major O'Connor did not come at all. She did not know, she could not deign to ask whether he had been forbidden to do so;

but she had a sort of feeling, that, whether this were the case or not, Major O'Connor felt that he had gone too far, as it was his way to do, and that he was now anxious to draw back, as was also his way. Then came the Count Manfredi with honied words and passionate looks, and gentle pressures of the hand, and though she could not tell him all her griefs, for they were not of the sort that bear telling, nor was he quite the man to tell them to, yet she gave him to understand that they were many, and the Count's sympathy was very soothing to her. At last the clock struck, then she started: "Oh! the parade must be over. Captain Courteney is always home about this time."

Count Manfredi took this as his congé, and even his doing this gave him a fresh advantage: "And you will come to the ball to-morrow night!" he said holding her hand in his, and looking into her eyes with one of his most powerful looks, and

Mrs. Courteney for the first time, felt the power of it, and it was not necessary for her to say she would—her face showed that sufficiently. Oh! she was so weary of the dull misery of her daily life; anything, anything to escape from that! The Count Manfredi felt that his visit had been a great success, he had got a hold upon her now. Then, as he went away down the broad white, staring road, he met Captain Courteney, and the two looked at each other for the first time. “That man never was my rival,” said the Count to himself. “Who was it then? and what has become of him?” and Captain Courteney, before entering his own door, looked back at the Count, and cursed him with low deep curses, for though he had never set eyes on the man before, he knew he must be the Count Manfredi, and that he was going away from a *tête-à-tête* interview with his wife, and though he had burnt that letter, and so knew that the Count could never have got that, yet

he had not been able to prevent this interview; and as he opened the door and went up stairs, he felt very sick at heart.

CHAPTER IX.

REGATTA TIME.

KATHLEEN and Sybil sat together in Kathleen's dressing-room at Clarence Villa, a dressing-room that was so fitted up as to look as much like a sitting-room as possible, though still retaining some of its original properties. The day had grown yet more oppressive, as it drew towards evening, and Kathleen was only very lazily making believe to illuminate a very massive photograph album, while Sybil half reclined on the sofa, watching her. "That man is the greatest beast it was ever my luck to meet," said Kathleen, giving the photograph, as she spoke, a rather startling red and yellow border.

“London men are all beasts, I believe.”

“I have always so wished for a London season,” said Sybil, bending forward to look at the beast’s photograph. “But you are getting quite *blasée*, Kathleen.”

“Indeed I am, quite blazed as the Sandy would say. But, oh Sybil! how I envy you; you don’t know what I wouldn’t give to change places with you, in spite of all your dull life, and in spite of your aunt, and she would be a nuisance to me. How we should fight! I can’t think how she lets you associate with me, as it is. I really don’t believe she thinks me proper.”

“Oh, Kathleen, don’t.”

“It don’t do me any harm. Lots of people don’t think me fit to have anything to do with, and I’m sure if I could I’d cut myself. Only, alas! I can’t.”

“That is all nonsense, I never heard of any one wishing to cut you. You are the most popular person, I know, everyone seems to like you,” and Sybil sighed

gently, then added quickly, "and I'm sure you quite deserve it."

"Indeed, I don't. Oh, Sybil, if you only knew what it costs me to look so happy sometimes. I do despise myself so for doing so, but I know people always like one the better for it. It takes more than anything with the mob. The interesting only does for *tête-à-têtes*; then sometimes it's very fetching. Goodness, what a flash of lightning. I suppose it's the thunder in the air makes me feel so low. Now if I were a man I should take a pick-me-up. Isn't that what Sandy's always talking of?"

"I never heard Mr. Beaumont speak of anything of the kind," said Sybil indignantly, then growing rather red, and stooping over the photograph book to hide this. "That's a Roman photograph, is it not? so beautifully distinct. Have you one of the Count Manfredi here? Yes, I remember that one. But it isn't really like him, is it? Oh, that's a much better

one, how dreadfully like it is to him ! The eyes seem really to see one, it almost frightens one to look at it. Kathleen, you don't really care for him, do you ?" Sybil's voice rather trembled as she asked this bold question, and she did not even venture to look up at Kathleen's face, but the latter answered passionately :

" Care for him ! I believe I hate him, and yet if he were to ask me to be his wife to-morrow, I know I should not say no, and I should be mad for joy, mad ! But he will not—he never will—lucky for me too ! Oh, is it not hateful, Sybil, is it not degrading to feel like that ! Oh, that awful flash !" and the two girls rose and ran to the window to look out, while a loud clap of thunder rumbled in the distance. The storm quickly grew worse, the thunder growing nearer and nearer, till it seemed to burst right over their heads, threatening almost to shake down the house, while the rain poured down at intervals in buckets full, seeming like a

regular water spout, while it lasted. The lightning was very glorious to look upon, especially as the day fast darkened in, and for a little while they watched it in silence, then Kathleen said: "unlucky for the yachts this. The race will hardly be a good one I should think." There was too much pretence at indifference to the magnificence of the spectacle they were gazing at for Sybil to care to answer this, and Kathleen soon felt it also, as she exclaimed: "It's terribly forked; suppose it were to strike one of us dead, do you think any one would really care?"

"I should if it struck you," and Sybil looked lovingly at her friend's beautiful face, passing her arm round her as if to protect her. But Kathleen gazed at the storm outside.

"Yes, because you are standing beside me, and it would be very awful to you," she said, "but it would not really make any difference to you. It would make most difference to mother, I suppose; I

wonder what she would do without me, and Sandy, dear old boy, he would really care. It wouldn't make much difference to him, for his regiment might be ordered abroad any day, but I believe he would really care more than any one. I wonder how long Lord Faversham would take to forget me, poor dear boy; I wish I'd never let him get to care for me. You think scuffling wrong, I believe, Sybil."

"Yes, I think it very wrong."

"Then I wonder you have anything more to do with me. But I only scuffle with boys, and I never thought he'd get really to care for me. Oh dear, I shall never forget that song last night."

"But it was a great shame to go on with him as you did, Kathleen, you know it was. Of course he got to care for you, he did from the beginning. Why you said yourself, that that was what made him so uninteresting, that he was so desperately in love, and if you never meant to care for him, why did you encourage

him as you did ? letting him always be with you too ? I do really think it very wrong, and very unworthy of you, Kathleen ; but perhaps you did care for him a little, you would have cared for him really, if this Count had not come here just now," and Sybil looked up with a sharp interrogative glance at her companion.

"No, I should never have cared for him," said Kathleen sternly, "men are so different, they seem to care for lots of people one after another, and sometimes several at once. But I can't. Their passions are stronger in every way than ours, I suppose ; but they are stronger to get over them also. Don't pity Lord Faversham too much, you'll soon hear of him just as much in love with somebody else, and don't give me up altogether, dear Sybil. You're the best friend I've got, and I couldn't bear to lose you. Why that flash actually played round your head, it didn't blind you, did it dear ? What a pity Lord Faversham wasn't here, and

he would certainly have lost his heart to you, for it suited you down to the ground, and then you would have been able to comfort him yourself. You ought always to wear orange, I see ; but let's go to mother now, she can't bear lightning, and she won't like being left alone."

The thunder and lightning raged on ; it tore one or two fine old trees to pieces, and knocked down one or two cottages, and there were stories in the papers, how it had killed a pig here, and a cow there, and blinded a labouring man somewhere else, and among all the other misfortunes it brought about, it very much disarranged the yacht race. The *Flora* did not win after all, and a great heavy schooner, that no one knew much about, and that had hardly managed to start till half an hour after the others, walked off with the prize in the end. The scene of confusion on board the *Flora* herself was dreadful indeed, and it would require a far other pen than mine to depict it. The champagne

had proved all that any one had a right to expect, whether considering the price paid for it or not, and of the three gentlemen on board, only one was not well half-seas over before the lightning began, and that one was Teddy Long, who had made such a fuss about it, and a very good story he was able to make about the scene on board, and to relate to his intimates next day. How Mlle. Flore had screamed, and sought safety in anyone's arms, and how Simpson had clasped Faversham to his manly bosom by mistake for her, and how he had sworn when he had found out whom he had got hold of, and how he had ordered every aperture to be tightly closed up, and the lamps to be lit, and how he had tried to obtain a false courage by drinking, for

“He's the greatest coward, Simpson is, you know, the greatest coward, and the greatest ass, and how really the air in the cabin had grown so bad one could not breathe, and it gave me the most

confounded headache," young Long finished up his account with, "really my head's quite splitting with it to-day, quite splitting," and if his hearers rather sniggered over this finale, why Teddy Long did not care at all, not he. "I say, I shall go and dine with Faversham before the ball," he said, "he's got beastly drunk yesterday, so there's sure to be lots of soda going, and I don't think I should mind some myself. One wants something before the work this evening. Why there are all the girls of the season to be reviewed to-night, except those Miss Propers, who arn't allowed to go, because everyone's there, and don't they wish they were? Ta-ta see you all again to-night, if I'm not crushed to death, before I come across you, or struck all of a heap by the cruel glance of some fair apparition. Take care of yourselves, tell my friends I'm alive if you go to the Flower Show, and try to console them. I'm not up to showing myself there," and off swaggered Teddy

Long, slapping his highly varnished little boots with a diminutive cane, and picking up an acquaintance, before he was well gone, linked to whose arm he managed to get down Union Street, and to the Pier Hotel, where he wanted to look up Faversham.

On the Pier there was a well known string band playing, and people were as usual during this week watching the yachts, which were having a wonderfully close race this year for the Town Cup, and they were talking about the unfortunate race of the day before, which had really been no race at all, and the awful thunder storm also afforded a great deal of conversation, and all the ladies were vying with each other in their accounts of what cowards they had been, for thunder is one of those things, people seem really proud of being frightened of. As to Lady Killowen, she had been like Mr. Simpson in trying to exclude every particle of light, and ordering the lamps to be lit

before their time, though as to the brandy and soda part of his programme, she did not say anything about that.

“Were you very frightened too, Miss Mordaunt?” said Sandy to Sybil, who had been allowed to come down the pier that day with Lady Killowen and Kathleen.

“Well rather, I think,” said Sybil smiling. “Thunder always gives one a frightened feeling, don’t you think so?”

“Yes, I suppose it does—gives one an electric shock,” said Sandy, making one of his bad jokes; then for about ten minutes he talked to Sybil quite seriously, and as usual came to the conclusion, that she was as good as gold, but notwithstanding at the end of the ten minutes, he flitted off to Kathleen and Miss Zieri, who were sitting together next to Mrs. Zieri, Messrs. Simpson and De Vaux standing up before them, while Count Manfredi sat at Kathleen’s side. There was a gleam in the Count’s eyes, as Sandy approached, that, had he seen it, might well have

frightened him more than thunder, but he did not see it, and joined in the general conversation quite unconsciously. It was rather constrained by reason of neither Madame Zieri's nor the Count's speaking English, vowing indeed they did not even understand it, though it would be hard to believe the Count Manfredi in this. However, he always kept up the belief, often finding it stand him in good stead, and now sitting silent, except when Kathleen addressed some little speech to him, he was at full leisure to watch the others, and see through all their little ways, and form his conclusions about them, and as he watched them he came to several conclusions; first, that Miss Zieri neither was nor intended to be engaged to Mr. Simpson, that did not interest him much; secondly, that Mr. Simpson did intend to marry her, and would consider himself thrown over and badly treated, when he found she would not have him, and be proportionately piqued and angry, that

interested him more ; thirdly, that Kathleen very much preferred Sandy to either of the other two men ; though one at least of them, was paying her very great attention ; and, lastly, that Sandy was so very much in love with his beautiful cousin, that he had very little thought to bestow upon any other person or thing.

“ Yes, it is through her that I must wound him,” thought the Count, and then he settled his little scheme. Sandy was a hopeless lover, or as nearly so, as any lover well could be, it would not be paining him sufficiently for him, the Count, to win her to himself, as he felt he could so easily do, besides there was Mrs. Courteney ; he was not inclined to make believe to marry just now. No he would make her choose some man, who must be thoroughly distasteful to Sandy, with whom it must be thoroughly impossible for him to think of her as happy. She must debase herself in his eyes, as his father had led another woman to debase herself in his, the Count’s,

eyes, and she must do so ; so as to root out all his faith in woman, as all the Count's faith had been rooted out long ago.

That was his idea ; the difficulty would be how to carry it out, but the Count did not despond about that. He saw that he had easy tools to work with, and the only thing he now wanted was to find the man sufficiently worthless to suit his ideas of vengeance. He had not far to look for him, if he had but known it ; but he had not yet fixed on the man, when Kathleen joined her mother and Sybil to go off the Pier with them.

Colonel Gordon was talking to Sybil, jestingly asking her in his kindly way, how many hearts she meant to break at the ball that night, and bidding her be merciful, and Sybil smiled at his joke, but put it away from herself as she said : " I wonder if it will really be as crowded a ball as people say, I thought there would be so many people on the Pier, and now there don't seem to be any. Are they spending

all the afternoon at that stupid Flower Show? It's a great pity to have it to-day, when so much is going on."

"Well, it can't be helped very easily. But there seem a pretty good number here too. Who's missing?"

"Oh, the Sitdowns, and the Standups, and Captain Loiter, he's always here, and Lord Faversham, where is he?"

Then Colonel Gordon laughed: "Perhaps he does not feel quite steady enough on his legs yet. He was carried on shore, they say, yesterday evening. Well, why not?" as he saw the young ladies look rather shocked. Kathleen had come up by this time, and was listening now. "I should think it was rather jolly, and he'll be well enough for the ball, I dare say."

Then Sybil and Kathleen followed Lady Killowen. "How horrid!" said Sybil with a sigh of disgust.

"I suppose all men do it," said Kathleen. "It's no use being disgusted, but I'd rather not hear of it," and she laughed. She

can hardly be thought very vain, if she thought that, perhaps, it was partly owing to herself that Lord Faversham had been carried on shore the evening before, and this idea made her all the more lenient in her judgment of him, and Sybil also thought that it was partly owing to Kathleen, but if his love for her led to such consequences, she no longer felt any pity for him, and was readily convinced that she should soon hear of him as desperately in love with some one else. Yet after all, it had very little to do with Kathleen, that Lord Faversham had drunk rather too freely of the Flora's spirituous liquors, nor was it because of the evil results of his excesses, that he did not show upon the Pier; but, in truth, because his mother had unexpectedly arrived to see him, as she said. She had got Major De Lancey's note that morning in her drawing-room in Wilton Street, and barely swallowing a morsel of breakfast, she had put on her bonnet and shawl, and driven to the Vic-

toria Station, bidding her maid pack up her things as quickly as she could, and follow her down to Ryde in the evening. But she said nothing about Major De Lancey's note to her son. She was so much alarmed by his appearance and evident depression, that she determined to take him away at once, but she hoped to do so without alarming him about himself, and the boy saw through her fears at once, and as she said nothing about them to him, thought they were greater than they were, and that his case was hopeless, and was almost glad that it was so. Poor boy Earl!

CHAPTER X.

THE R. V. Y. C. BALL.

THE Regatta Ball at Ryde is generally a very crowded one, and curiously enough there is a more mixed company to be seen at it than any other of the Ryde balls, though the tickets admitting people have, in this case, to be obtained through a member of the R. V. Y. Club, and can not be simply bought at a shop, as is sometimes the case. It is not a very satisfactory ball either; those who care only for dancing have very little room, and those, who go to look at other people, generally find it impossible to see just those very people it would most amuse them to watch. The ball in the season that

Kathleen O'Grady queened it at Ryde, was like those of other years in many respects. But those who like Teddy Long went to review the young ladies, were pretty unanimous in their judgment. "Miss Zieri did very well on a race course, but Miss O'Grady beat her as hollow as every one else at night," then they discussed more nicely the merits of all the lesser stars. Mrs. Courteney looked grand in a green satin, even more gored than fashion demanded, and with a long train, which in consequence clung about her feet more than was quite graceful, and was not convenient for dancing, so she sat out a good deal in the wide dimly lighted balcony with Major O'Connor. There was nothing particular in her sitting in the balcony that night, for every one sits in the Club balcony at the Regatta ball, and it is curtained in, and though sometimes the curtains are drawn up, it is hardly much cooler than the ball-room itself, and there was not much pleasure

to Mrs. Courteney in sitting there with Major O'Connor, for the Major was still feeling he had gone too far, and was desirous to draw back, and in that mood he was not very agreeable ; few men are indeed.

Major O'Connor, it so happened was in the army, but his real profession was that of a lady killer, and as he had not cared to throw away his hundred and one chances of an heiress for the sake of Ada Jerninghame ; so, he did not care to do so now for the sake of Ada Courteney, but he had a *tendresse* for her, which every now and then he was led away into fancying a *grande passion*, and that made him waste his time at present, and this evening to very little purpose, for he was neither agreeable to himself nor to her. Count Manfredi did not guess that this red haired Major was the rival he was so anxious to discover ; but, all the same, from what he saw of their manner to each other, he thought it as well to leave the two alone

together at first, having obtained a promise of a dance far on in the evening, when the room would be clearer. Meanwhile, he devoted himself to Kathleen. He did not talk much to her, that was not the Count's way ; but then, what he did say had so much meaning in it, said as he said it.

He did the daring thing of speaking of Mrs. Courteney to her, and he openly expressed a desire to win one of the loving looks, which those large dreamy eyes must, he felt sure, be able to bestow, for all their so generally scornful expressions, and at the same time he just touched upon her dress and paint in a manner to give his hearer the idea that he looked upon her as a person of another sphere. The rich rosy blushes mantled on Kathleen's cheek, as for a while she fancied that the Count was a flirt indeed, may be a heartless flirt, if that adjective indeed adds any force ; that he was a flirt as regarded others, Mrs. Courteney for

instance, but that for herself, he was quite different.

Lord Faversham looked very white and ill, standing silent in the door-way; but when he came and asked for a dance, and Kathleen told him, her card was already full, the colour came back into his cheeks at once, and so violently, that she was frightened. "Perhaps I can manage it," said she hurriedly looking at her card. "Yes fourteen; fourteen if you like. I will arrange it with Sandy."

"Thank you," said Lord Faversham, "shall I write my name on your card? I have not got one myself. It is the only dance I shall dance to-night."

It was with tears in her eyes that Kathleen told Sandy she had given away his dance; he was not very pleased, but took it quietly, when he heard she had had no other for Lord Faversham, only making rather a worse joke than usual on the occasion. "I am dreading it so," said Kathleen. "I don't know how I shall

get through it. It will be a mercy when it is over."

Then Sandy spoke in his quiet reliable sort of way: "I'll be looking after you, and be kind to the poor fellow. He his going away to-morrow."

That dance was very painful to Kathleen; it was a waltz unfortunately, and after once trying to get round the room, and being a good deal knocked about in the attempt, Lord Faversham got so dreadfully out of breath, that Kathleen could not, with any conscience, let him try again, and so there was nothing for it but to talk: "I am going to leave Ryde to-morrow," began Lord Faversham, "my mother has taken it into her head to think me seedy, and wants me to try some German Baths, and after that the grape cure. It does not sound bad, does it?"

"No, I should think it would be very nice; but are you really going to-morrow? that is very sudden. Lady Faversham goes too, I suppose?"

“Yes, and I don’t know any better nurse than my mother—if one were ill,” he said in his simple way.

“But I hope you are not *really* ill. That concert—”

“Oh, it was not the concert. But we all go off early, we Favershams; and Johnny will manage the estate, much better than I ever should.” Kathleen felt half choking, as she afterwards told Sybil, and did not know what to say; she had not dared to look at him yet, neither had he once looked at her since they began dancing. “Won’t you take an ice or something? it is cooler downstairs than here.”

After he had brought her an ice, and actually found her an arm-chair, generally a difficult matter at the Regatta ball, Lord Faversham cleared his throat nervously, then leaning on the back of her chair, and looking steadily on the ground, he began again: “Miss O’Grady, I hope you will forgive me for what I am going

to say. I know I have no right to do so—no right but one,” he added in a lower voice, “and that I do not wish to say anything about; it would only be painful to—us both,” he pronounced these last words with difficulty, and then paused, and Kathleen felt as if now it was coming. She had thought to be spared this, but if it was to be said, it would be a good thing to get it over, but she was not prepared for what was really coming: “I know people often say—I don’t know it myself—because—because I am only a boy, I suppose; but people often say that young ladies have to marry people they don’t care about, because—because—” his voice had become so husky, that he had to stop, but he soon went on again, “and you know I have lots of money, much more than I know what to do with, and if you would but—if you would but let me be your banker,” said he, now speaking very fast and looking imploringly into her face, “you know it would make no difference

to me, and there would always be enough for Johnny, and you don't know what a favour I should think it—what pleasure it would give me.”

“Oh, Lord Faversham, you are too kind; but indeed—indeed I'm not so hard up as all that,” said Kathleen, divided between a desire to cry and to laugh.

“I did not mean that. Of course I did not mean to say you were—only you were much richer before your cousin came into the estate, and I should think it such an honour. Do promise,” he entreated, “if you don't want it now, perhaps you will some other time. I shall think you are offended with me if you will not, and you are not offended with me, are you?”

“No indeed, indeed I am not, and I will promise if I ever am hard up. There will that satisfy you?” and Kathleen actually managed to smile on him, as he took away her ice plate.

“Can I get you any thing more?”

“No, thanks,” and she began rising as

if to go up stairs ; but Lord Faversham did not offer his arm. He had heard people discussing Miss O'Grady's matrimonial prospects, and they had all talked, as if her choice would be limited by the necessity of choosing a rich man, and he could not bear to think that it should be so, that his beautiful idol might one day have to suffer the same pain as he himself now suffered, and all for the want of miserable money, of which he now seemed to himself to have such a superfluity, for what could money do for him now ? He wished he could offer her his whole fortune, unburdened by the necessity of accepting himself at the same time, but even Lord Faversham did not think this was possible, so then this other expedient had come into the poor simple boy's head, and he longed to carry it out, as only an ill person can long, so he remained standing beside Kathleen, his eyes fixed on the ground, racking his brain to find some new means of persuasion.

He was very flushed now, and his hair looked very wild, and Kathleen wondered if he was very ill indeed, and thought how bad it must be for him to be there, and knew that he had only come there to say good bye to her, and with these thoughts there were others mingled. The recollection of her wretched debts came back to her. What a real comfort it would be to have them paid, would it not also be conferring a pleasure upon him to let him pay them for her ! Had it not been unkind in her as well as hardly quite honest to pretend indignation at the idea of being hard up, when she really was so very much so, and where the money was to come from, she really did not know ; and so, though how it came about she never could recollect afterwards, when she went up stairs with Lord Faversham again, it was already settled that before he left Ryde the next day he was to send her a cheque sufficient to pay the bills that had become such a vexation to her.

Before she got into the ball-room, Mr. De Veux claimed her for his dance, which had been going on some little time, and as she was going away on his arm, Lord Faversham held out his hand. "Good-night, Miss O'Grady," was all he said, and Kathleen could not speak at all, as he took her hand and pressed it with a short convulsive pressure. She had never thought to be so overcome at parting from the pretty boy Earl, but she got over her feelings as soon as the next dance with the Count Manfredi came; whilst he, poor boy, went sadly down stairs, only comforting himself by the idea, that "we Favershams all go off early." At the bottom of the stairs he met Sandy, who finding he was going, volunteered to walk home with him.

"Hang that concert!" he said, "I'll never go to another as long as I live. But those Baths will set you all right again soon, old fellow. We'll be seeing you back now before the winter, I dare say."

“No, I shall never come to Ryde again,” said Lord Faversham decisively, “you’ll write me a line though sometimes, won’t you, Beaumont!”

“Well, I am not much of a hand at a letter. But I will write to you, oh yes! tell you all the news.”

“Oh, if I were but you,” said Lord Faversham sadly, “but if it was giving her up to you I should not much care—at least I’d bear it like a man—but to think that she may marry some villain, who will break her heart. That is what I can’t bear, I can’t.”

“But it is not at all likely,” said that foolish Sandy, “did you never offer to her yourself though, Faversham!”

“No, it would have been no use. She does not care for me. I thought she might once, I was a fool of course, but—that night at the concert,” and Lord Faversham almost groaned. “I saw it all quite clearly. I saw she would never care for men—ever, never, and it broke my heart. Oh that

dreadful song! I shall never forget it. I thought I should never get to the end of it. Well it's the last song I shall ever sing, it will soon be all over now, that's the only comfort. But good-bye old fellow, your partners will be blessing you for not going to them."

"Good-bye! but I shall see you again to-morrow. What boat are you going by? oh, the 10.30; well, I'll be down to see you off—and try and take things easily, Faversham. Depend upon it, that is the only way. No one can ever have what they really want, you know. It's always the same story," and the voice of the cheerful easy-going Sandy Beaumont quavered as he spoke.

Then the two young men each gave the other a hearty pressure of the hand, and Lord Faversham turned into his hotel, where he found his mother anxiously sitting up for him. He never knew how much it had cost her to see him go off to that ball—and Sandy Beaumont went back

to his partners. The first of these was Miss Zieri, whom he found professing herself very cross because the first bars of the Guards' waltz had been already played, and those were the only ones she really cared to dance to.

“Oh, mon Dieu!” she said; “how you English eat! you are only just done supper, I suppose, and I left you eating one hour ago, one hour, no, two hours.”

Sandy did not explain what he had been about; but maintained he saw no reason to apologise for his tardy appearance since he found her so very well amused, probably she had been very sorry to see him come to her at all.

“Amused!” and Miss Zieri shrieked with laughter, “*avec ce bête d'homme là*. Oh, for shame, M. Sandy.”

“I don't understand you,” said Sandy, the imperturbable. “Of course I don't flatter myself that you will find me at all as agreeable as the man of your choice.”

“The man of my choice! *que dites vous!*”

what do you mean by that !” and the little French coquette stood still and looked at him with wide open eyes, and the most comical look of astonishment.

“Why, you are engaged to him, arn’t you ? I thought it was all announced, and that I ought to have congratulated you long ago.”

“So you thought I was *une petite intrigante*, and that I had come over to England ready to marry any great fool of your countrymen like that *bête* M. Simpson. No, no, M. Sandy, I have only seventeen years, and no *dot*, it is true, but my face, which is worth something, or my glass tells me lies ; but I have no hurry, and I’d rather sweep floors than—— ah, bah ! Let us valse ! Do you not hear the music that you stand still and talk ?” When after one or two turns round the room they stopped, again Miss Zieri went into one of her fits of laughter, “and you really believed it ! Oh, but you are simple—— simple ! *Oh, mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !*” and

Sandy took her laughter very easily ; he was not thinking much about her, but still he was glad she was not going to marry Mr. Simpson, a gentleman in whom he had not yet been able to discover one single good quality, and all the while he was watching Kathleen, who was dancing with some stranger, and looking *very* beautiful.

Count Manfredi was now sitting in the balcony in the seat that had been occupied by Major O'Connor, talking—oh, how very differently !—to Mrs. Courteney, for the Count was a man who had no need ever to draw back ; he never went further than he intended, and to-night he was anxious to make sure of the ground he had conquered the day before, over at Southsea, and Mrs. Courteney felt very keenly the difference between the two men, knowing so well, too, which it was she cared for, and knowing also, that they both knew, she cared not at all for her husband, and she was very miserable. Poor, poor Ada

Courteney, she had arrived at that mood which says, "Let them prate about decorum, Who have characters to lose," but she still did care how "the world went" more or less. The fatal die had not been thrown, she had not yet crossed the Rubicon, so she had donned her green satin, and brushed back her dark locks, looping them up in the most imposing of chignons, and then she had put unfortunately a trifle too much red on the cheeks that had grown so much paler and thinner than of old in these last few days, and had come to the ball, ready to meet what Fate had in store for her. She had not "wings like a dove;" she knew she could not ever really "flee away and be at rest," but she felt she could not remain much longer with her husband, and that she would never be able to go away with Major O'Connor, and so she began to see that what Fate had in store for her, might be that she should go away with the Count. She did not wish it; wish it! oh, no! ten times rather

would she go on even with this wretched life she was leading now, but she felt that this life was not to be for her much longer, and then what refuge would she have? And the Count talked to her of Italy, talked of his villa, of the beautiful scenery, of the sunsets, and the moonlight, and the pleasant easy Italian society, and though he did not openly suggest the idea of it to her, not in any way, so that she could say, whether she would go there, or would not, yet he pictured her to herself, as ruling over an Italian palace, showing her all the while how much more suited she was to it than to any English lodgings at Southsea or elsewhere, and the society of a marching regiment.

“Though even then the jewel would make the setting appear contemptible,” said the Count, and Mrs. Courteney toyed with her fan as she listened, and did not look at the Count, who looked so passionately at her, but gazed straight before her into the ball-room, through the ever open

window, and there once and again she caught sight of Kathleen O'Grady, beautiful, beautifully dressed, with few but costly ornaments, admired by everyone; ladies and men alike pleased by a word or a smile from her, and seeming herself almost borne aloft and raised from the ground by her Spring-tide of youth and happiness.

Once and again too, Kathleen stole a glance into the balcony, and saw that Count Manfredi was still sitting beside Mrs. Courteney, and then her cheeks flushed, and woe betide the man who was near her, for who could stand heart whole the smile of irresistible sweetness that she would cast upon him then! She was gloriously beautiful that night, and she had not been long enough at Ryde for any one to be tired of her yet, and not any one could have found a fault with her, unless that she seemed almost vulgarly happy, and then the queenly carriage of the well-shaped head, and the graceful

dignity, with which she moved, forbade such an idea for a single moment.

At last, Count Manfredi came for another dance; then the bright radiance left her, and the large blue eyes wandered drearily about the ball-room, and she listened with a *distrain* air, and the Count talked very little. He had come straight from cloaking Mrs. Courteney, and he felt as if he had done his night's work, but while one of his schemes was prospering so well, he knew it would not do quite to neglect the other, or he ran the risk of not having sufficient time to complete it.

“ Vous avez l'air *distrain*, Mademoiselle, vous ne me parlez pas. Est-ce que vous pensez à moi—moi ? ” and the dark eyes looked down full of meaning, and the blue eyes that had striven to look up indignant, failed, and looked beautifully pathetic, and then they waltzed fast and furiously. Then the Count talked of blighted existences, of hearts that had loved once, and would give much to love

again, and could not; of other hearts, that were young and fresh, and had *their* sufferings to endure in the future, hélas ! would that it were not so. Which of my readers does not know that kind of talk ? It is so old, so old ; bah ! it seems almost musty, when one comes to write it down, and yet, when it was all said to Kathleen, though she was a nineteenth century young lady, and knew more of life than her contemporaries generally, it sounded all new and strange, and intensely interesting, and she did not believe that the one heart could not love again, nor that the other heart had much to suffer, and as to Mrs. Courteney, the thought of her troubled her no longer. The Count was a man of the world, and men of the world often amused themselves with *liaisons* with such people, but that was all, quite all. He might still marry her herself, Kathleen, and become a reformed character ; or he might marry her, and not become a reformed character, and either way she would love him very

much, and the one heart would learn to love again, and the other would have very little to suffer.

Sandy Beaumont was not quick to understand other people's thoughts; he had that great gift of tact which prevented his hurting the feelings of those around him, but he could not well have said what those feelings were; he was very downright himself, and believed quite simply whatever people told him, unless he happened already to know something positive to the contrary, and he was not one of those, who care for watching other people, and find such watching amusing and instructive. But "Believe me, Love has eyes," as Miss Louisa Pyne sings so sweetly, so though with his own eyes Sandy was not good at seeing much, that went on around him, yet with those that love lent him, he saw enough to make him very sorrowful on the night of that Regatta ball, and it was with a heavy heart that he went home to his hotel after it, and ordered himself

to be called early next morning, that he might be up in time to see Lord Faversham off. He felt a sort of fellow-feeling with the young earl, both had risked their hopes in the same venture, and both were alike shipwrecked. For the first time he said to himself, in all sincerity, that his beautiful cousin would never be anything more to him than a cousin; he had often said it before, but he had never really believed it till that night, and believing it his life seemed a very dreary prospect to the young man.

He had known very little love, kindly loving nature, though his own was; his mother had died, while he was only a child, and since then he had scarcely ever seen his father, living at school as most boys do, and spending his holidays for the most part with an uncle of his mother's, a crabbed old bachelor uncle, who maintained that boys were best let alone, and acted on his theory. There were servants, who were all fond of him in their way, and

there were the people in the village, who always welcomed the young lad when he came among them, and there were the horses and the dogs, whom Sandy loved as much as any human creature in those days, and who, we may be sure, loved him in return; but of the kind protecting mother-love, the greatest blessing that God gives His children, when he sends them forth to fight the battle of life, of that there was none for him. Sometimes, and those were very happy times for him, he would go over to stay at Killowen Castle, but he did not find it there, though they were all very kind to him, and called him Sandy, and kissed him, which no one else did.

But though he was Lady Killowen's favourite nephew, it was not anything like mother-love that she gave him, nor was Lord Killowen's regard for the boy at all of the protecting kind; while as to Kathleen, she tyrannized over him as a beautiful young girl will tyrannize over a

boy, who is only a few years her senior, and has been always in love with her. He had been always in love with her, this easy-going straightforward young Sandy Beaumont, so much so that he had never, even for a moment, thought of any other girl in that way at all; he was not much given to looking forward, any more than he was given to looking back, though he did both this night, but in all his dreams of the future, whenever he had made any, the thought of Kathleen was the golden thread, that made all the rest bright, and now there was no longer any golden thread, for, as he said to himself, his cousin would only be his cousin to him all the rest of his life. Then of course he would never marry, there would never be any glad home fire-side for him, but always wearisome mess dinners and monotonous regimental duties; henceforward, he must learn to put all his heart into them. And Sandy Beaumont sighed a long heavy sigh, as he thought this, and thought

too that now he had very little heart to put into anything.

“But if she is only happy!” thought the brave young lover, with that abnegation of self, not yet so uncommon in lovers, for all that people talk of the selfishness of youth, “if she is only happy, I shall soon learn to bear my life, if it is ever so dreary. If she is only happy——” and then he fell to thinking over what he had seen that evening.

But that was a very painful subject, and it did not seem to grow less painful with thinking of it, so he soon gave over that, but before he went to bed, he knelt down and prayed, and to his prayers that night, he added a short petition, that whoever Kathleen married, he might be such a man as would make her happy, then he went to bed and slept soundly.

Not so was it with Lord Faversham; he thought it was because he was leaving Ryde, and so doing was leaving Kathleen, and life itself for the little time that he yet

had to live,—and Lord Faversham believed wonderfully firmly, that it was a very little time, considering how lately this belief had first come into his mind,—and that little time that he yet had to live, having left everything that made life dear, he could hardly look upon as life, and so he tossed about and coughed, and coughed and tossed about, and did not sleep at all, and was very weary of the night; and Lady Faversham, who had an adjoining room, heard him coughing, and grew also very weary of the night, as she thought how often she had listened to the same sound, during the years in which his father had wasted away, as so many of the Favershams had done before him, and felt thankful, that she had hastened to her son, as she had done, and wished that she had never let him come down to Ryde alone. But boys are not like girls, and no fond mother can for ever keep her son under her own eye.

There was another person, who was also

very weary of that night, and that was Sybil Mordaunt; she buried her face in her pillow, and tried there to hide her burning blushes, but there was no one but herself in the room, and she could not hide them from herself. For Sybil Mordaunt knew that she had given away her heart unsought and unwanted to a man who had no heart to give her in return, and she felt that she could not take it back again for all that. As to winning Sandy's love, winning it even by means of the love she had given him, Sybil had no thoughts of that; she called maidenly modesty and pride to her rescue, and writhed inwardly as she felt that love was stronger than either. 'But it must not be,' said Sybil, 'it is not right that it should be, and it shall not be so,' and then she prayed that she might cease to love Sandy, not that Sandy might ever come to love her, for though Sybil had given her love away unsought, she was still modest, and she was still proud.

CHAPTER XI.

KATHLEEN, THE MAN WHO LOVED HER, AND
THE MAN WHOM SHE LOVED.

“HE is not a fit person for Kathleen to associate with, and you ought to prevent it.”

“Nonsense, Sandy, you know whether she would be likely to mind what I say, and £40,000 a year would cover a multitude of sins,” and Lady Killowen seemed to devote her whole attention to an intricate stitch in her lace work.

“It seems to, in this instance. Confound it all,” and Sandy ground his teeth, and dashing the paper cutter he had been playing with on the table, went to the window, and threw it wide open.

“Sandy,” said Lady Killowen, angrily, “that is not the way to behave in my drawing-room,” but her nephew did not heed her.

“I tell you the fellow is not respectable—is not leading even a commonly decent life.”

“That is *your* opinion. He goes everywhere here, and so he does in town too, I believe.”

“Because people do not know anything about him there. But why did Mrs. Gordon not let her daughter dance with him, as I *know* she does not, and even Lady Long won’t have him at her house, pretentious piece of worldliness that she is, and then you let Kathleen go out in that accursed Flora,” and Sandy bowed his face upon his hands to hide the hot angry tears that started from his eyes at the idea.

“Why did you not speak to your cousin yourself,” said Lady Killowen drily.

Sandy was too angry with his aunt to

represent how he had been over at Portsmouth, knowing nothing about it, but he still was determined to fight it out: "So because he has £40,000 a year, you think him a nice young man for a son-in-law."

"From what I hear of Mr. Simpson, I should not think he had much idea of *marrying*," said Lady Killowen with a scornful emphasis on the last word.

This fairly maddened Sandy. "And you can afford to sneer about it in that way. I tell you, I will never speak to you again, aunt, unless you promise me you will never consent."

"Come, come, Sandy, let my work alone," for in his anger and his wish to force his aunt to look him in the face, instead of keeping her eyes fixed upon her work, Sandy was snatching it from her. "Sit down now, and don't make a fool of yourself in that absurd way. Wait till Mr. Simpson has offered to your cousin, before you get into a rage about it. In my

opinion he is not in the least likely to do so. For the matter of that, he is engaged to Miss Zieri, I believe."

"No, he is *not*," shouted Sandy, "she told me so herself, and I never liked her better than when she told me so. I never thought there was so much good in the little coquette before. Well, there's no use stopping here, it seems—I shall go back to Portsmouth, I think."

"Good-bye then," said Lady Killowen, but Sandy would not say good-bye. He went sullenly out of the room, without ever looking at his aunt, and banged the door behind him, as a parting sign of his displeasure. Then he strolled slowly and sulkily down the pier, wrapt in not the most pleasant of thoughts, from which he was finally roused by the sight of the Count Manfredi, just landed from a Portsmouth steamer: "I thought you were out in the *Flora*," said Sandy.

"Did you?" and the Count seemed to read the young man's inmost thoughts with

his keen cruel eyes, "I was pressed to go, but *ce bon M. Simpson* is only *spirituel* when alone with the ladies. I thought I should be *de trop* in his harem."

Sandy felt this thrust all the more acutely because he was determined not to show it, but in his confusion, he forgot what French he knew, and could only say : "*vraiment.*"

"And you, how came it you did not go. I wonder you should think your fair cousin safe in such hands. But doubtless you thought her too pure to be contaminated. Will she satisfy your big countryman, or is Mlle. Flora also of the party?"

"You forget, Count, that you are speaking to me of my cousin," and Sandy drew himself up and looked sternly at the other.

"*Pardon, mon cher*, but I was speaking of Mademoiselle Flore. Do not confuse the two; there is a difference."

"A difference!" and Sandy grew very white, "look here, Count, I don't know

what you mean by it, but it strikes me you wish to quarrel with me, and—”

“The last thing in the world, that I should wish, my good child. Who should be friends if your father’s son and I were not?” and the expression of the Count’s eyes grew more dangerous than it had yet been. “*Voilà*, there is the Flora. Strange you English are; you talk of us Italians as loose in our ideas, and yet what Italian young lady would go out sailing with Mr. Simpson? He has no concealments too; it is all above board. Everyone here knows all about Mlle. Flore, and yet Miss O’Grady goes out in the yacht, that is called after her, nor despises the hand that is vowed to her service.”

The Count had been looking through his double glasses at the Flora, watching Mr. Simpson handing the ladies into her boat preparatory to coming on shore; now he sauntered away to receive them. Sandy looked after him in astonishment, he was as if in a dream. Why did this man try

to rake up every idea, that he knew must be distasteful to him? that he did it on purpose, he could not doubt—but why should he care to do it? “I have done nothing to offend him—he cannot think me a rival,” groaned the hapless Sandy, “besides he does not care—he does not care for her. Why did he not go out yachting to-day? I know Kathleen only went because she thought he was going. Oh, why is she so blind—so mad—why does she not know he has been spending the day with that miserable Mrs. Courtney?” and Sandy stood still and watched them. He saw Kathleen’s haughty look, as she hardly deigned to shake hands with the Count, and then he saw him almost whisper something to her, looking at her the while with those devouring eyes, and then a change came over her face, and she let him carry her cloak, and talked and smiled on him, and they walked off together in animated conversation, and she did not even see Sandy, who was stand-

ing so near, watching it all; but Miss Zieri did.

“Oh M. Beaumont! will nobody carry my cloak? poor me, nobody cares for me!”

“Why does not Mr. Simpson carry your cloak?” said Sandy in a rather grumpy tone, which he tried vainly to make sound cheerful.

“Oh, he is *enragé* with me. He will never speak to me again, he says. Such a day as we have had! Oh, *ce vilain* Ryde. I will never come to it again. Mamma must consent and go to Homburg, or I shall be too *ennuyée*.”

“You *ennuyée*! I should have thought you were always as amused—as amusing,” said he with an effort.

“Oh, *mon Dieu*! but what heavy compliments you English pay; why do you try then? They are not in your nature. But my good M. Sandy, why that air so sad—why that sigh?”

“Why if you are *ennuyée*, Miss Zieri, I

am sure you cannot wonder at anyone else being so."

"Oh, Sandy. Where have you sprung from?" said Kathleen looking round at last.

"From the pier," he replied drily, devoting his attention to Miss Zieri's cloak, which had up to this time been hanging loosely on his arm. Kathleen turned away again to talk to the Count, and then he swore inwardly at himself for having answered her so coolly.

When the Zieris' way parted from Kathleen's at the toll-gate at the end of the pier—for they lived on the Strand to the east of Ryde, whereas Clarence Villa was to the west—Kathleen begged they would not think of seeing her home, for Sandy would now be able to do that. Then Sandy tried to make up for his previous coolness by his alacrity in giving up Miss Zieri's cloak in order to do so, but he did not get Kathleen's instead, for the Count chose to walk on carrying that,

and then to Sandy's indignation Kathleen asked him, if he would not come in and "see mother," which as Sandy well knew at that hour, only meant an invitation to dinner. The Count was just declining, when he saw the expression of relief on Sandy's face :

"I shall be charmed," he said.

"Good-night, Kathleen," said Sandy, "I suppose you're all right now. I need not wait any longer," and he walked off without even waiting for an answer.

The Count looked after him with a curious expression: "Poor young man, I ought not to have accepted your kind invitation. It has vexed your cousin."

"If Sandy chooses to be vexed what does it matter?"

"Does it not matter?" and the Count looked curiously into her eyes, as if he was trying to read some mystery hidden there, and found it difficult, "and yet of all the aspirants to your hand, I thought he seemed the most favoured."

“Of *all* the aspirants to my hand; oh, Count!” laughed Kathleen. “But Sandy is not one of them,” she added with an air of displeasure.

“He would indeed be presumptuous if he were,” said the Count, and as they went upstairs together, his hand touched Kathleen’s, it might be accidentally, or it might not, but anyhow having touched it, the Count pressed it slightly, and Kathleen said nothing, only blushed crimson, showing she noticed it. Then they went in to Lady Killowen, and she begged the Count to stay dinner. It would have been too much contrary to her notions of hospitality not to do so, but she was not very gracious about it. However the Count stayed, and exerted himself much to be agreeable, at first finding it rather difficult, for Lady Killowen was in one of her grumpy moods, and ready to snub every one on every possible subject. It had not been pleasant to her to be so cold and unsympathising to poor Sandy that afternoon, who after all

was her favourite nephew, and she herself had not been at all over pleased with the Flora expedition, to which that bearish Mr. Simpson, as she secretly considered him, had not even had the grace to invite her, and her ever ready jealousy had been a good deal excited, as it always was, by any fresh proof of how very much Sandy cared for Kathleen, and how little for herself in comparison, so she was not exactly in the mood to have another man talk, brilliant man-of-the-world talk to herself, all the while casting looks of deep devotion before her daughter's bright young face.

Lady Killowen had been a beauty too, much more beautiful, as she always thought than Kathleen was, and it irritated her no longer to get any looks of devotion for her own share, and so this evening it was almost a consolation to her to think that this man did not care for her daughter. "She is a goose to think he does," thought Lady Killowen, and was so far pleased by the idea, that though she had no one else to

amuse her after dinner, she left the Count and Kathleen alone together to flirt to their hearts content, not even summoning them in from the verandah for coffee, when it came, late as usual, but letting it be taken out to them in the cool star-light. It was Kathleen who talked this evening, the Count listened and glanced expressive glances, visible even in the star-light, and when he took his leave at last with a final meaning glance, and a final still more meaning pressure of the hand, Kathleen felt almost as if her dreams had come true, and they had plighted their troth, and henceforward belonged to each other, and she sat quite still looking at the stars, afraid to break through her dream by moving.

“Come in, Kathleen,” said her mother sharply, “don’t sit out there any more thinking of the Count. You’ve been long enough talking to him in the damp, I’m sure. You need not sit there any longer, thinking of him like a love sick

girl. He does not care for you, or why did he not go out yachting? Depend upon it, he has been making love to that Mrs. Courteney all day. Well I hope you made a pleasant variety. Did Mr. Simpson lay his £40,000 a year at your feet, my dear? or are you only to share the Flora with him like that other girl Sandy is mad about!"

"Has Sandy been here to-day?" asked Kathleen quietly.

"Yes, he has been here," said Lady Killowen.

"And—did he like my going out in the Flora?" asked Kathleen nervously after a pause, during which she had waited to see if her mother would tell her what he had said of her own accord.

"Why, of course, he took for granted you meant to marry Mr. Simpson, as I suppose every one else will, I am quite looking forward to the congratulations to-morrow. But Sandy was not very likely to like the notion. I don't think he means

to congratulate you, my dear," said Lady Killowen all in the same dry disagreeable tone.

"Sandy ought to know better than to think such things of me," said Kathleen with the tears starting from her eyes.

"Well, my dear, I don't know how he is to know any better. The Count won't have you, and Mr. Simpson is the best *parti*, and of course you must take up with somebody, after going on with the Count, as you do."

"Mother!" began Kathleen, but her indignation overpowered her, and breaking off here, she rushed out of the room, and Lady Killowen quite satisfied now that she had vented her ill humour on some body, put her work carefully away, and went to bed also in the sweetest temper in the world.

CHAPTER XII.

ADA COURTENAY, HER HUSBAND,
AND HER LOVER.

MRS. COURTENAY sat alone in her South-sea lodgings ; she had quarrelled with her husband. It had come to that at last ; they had often quarrelled before, such quarrels as people have and make up, or don't make up, going on just the same after as before ; but this time it had been no such quarrel. Captain Courtenay had desired her to promise that she would have no further intercourse with either Count Manfredi or Major O'Connor ; his wife had refused to give such promise, and had tried to show him his absurdity in being jealous of two men at once. But Captain Courte-

ney, it seemed, chose to be absurd, he still demanded the promise, at last he went out, leaving her, as he said, to think it over. Then the Count had come to the house, and had spent some hours in Mrs. Courteney's company; whilst he was there Captain Courteney had returned—there had been no scene—he had simply made the Count Manfredi aware that his presence in his house was distasteful to him, and the Count, being a gentleman, had no choice left but to withdraw.

After he had gone, Captain Courteney turned to his wife: "This house no longer holds us both," he said. "But I will not turn you adrift, you can remain here till you have settled on some plan for yourself. I will go out and see about house room for myself for the night, and then we shall part—for ever." There was something very tragic in the poor Captain's tone, but whatever effect he might have produced by his manner, was spoilt by his adding in his usual

nervous anxious tone : “ You have nothing to say to that, have you ? ”

“ Nothing,” said Mrs. Courteney, quickly, then her husband went out, and she was left alone to think over all that had passed. Her position seemed very strange to herself, when she came to think it over. What had made her weak foolish husband all of a sudden assume that grand seigneur manner with her, leaving her without a word to say for herself ? Was it that she was guilty ? but in what was she guilty ? because she did not love her husband ? But that was a fault of such old standing, it did not seem to her, then thinking it over to herself, that she ever had loved him. It could not be that then that made her so incapable of answering him. Was it then that she loved the Count ? but she did not love him, could not bring herself to do so, and she moaned as she thought this to herself, for she believed that the Count loved her, and wished her to go away with him, and

he had gained a strange influence over her, and she believed she should go with him, when he asked her, and so if she only loved him, she thought she might yet be happy; but she did not love him. Her husband suspected her of doing so, but by doing so, he only showed his own stupidity. He always had been so very stupid.

Then her thoughts went to the man whom she did love. Would he help her now? she doubted it. It was some days now since he had been to see her; the last time they had met had been at the Regatta Ball, when Major O'Connor had been by way of drawing back; she did not think he would be likely to come forward now. Yet, if he knew how much she loved him; it surely was worth while to make the attempt. Suppose he were not inclined to help her, what then? she had no pride, that she risked the hurting of, this poor beauty; she had been admired, few people more so; but she did not recollect

the day when she had been rejected, and all feelings of pride had been put away from her long ago. That could not be reckoned among her faults. So though she had little hope from the attempt she was about to make, she went to her writing table, and wrote :

“ Edward,

“ You have often asked me to call you so, and I would not. But now there is no longer any reason why I should not do so. I have quarrelled with my husband. It is all over with me. I have not a friend to turn to. It is long since I have seen you, have you too quarrelled with me ? if not, come to my assistance now, and when all the world has forsaken me, do not you forsake,

“ Yours,

“ ADA.”

Having written this note she sealed it and directed it, then slowly and despondently

she dried her pen, and as she did so her mind went back to a time long ago, a little Devonshire lane with tall o'erarching trees and high banks on either side, such as Devonshire lanes are wont to have, and a gay picnic party wandering through the lane. And as it turned about, and they were hidden from the others, she and one other, an arm had wound round her waist, and hot kisses had been pressed upon her lips, and the Hon. Alick De Vere had sworn to love her and be true to her against all opposition.

He was handsome and a "plunger," which sounded grand to her, who had literally grown up in infantry barracks, and she was only sixteen then, and the whole thing had been very new to her, and she could not understand it at all, when a month or two after she heard of his marriage to his rich cousin, whom, it then appeared he had been engaged to all the time. She had not met him since, but when she married Captain Courteney, among her other

presents there had come this pen gold set with turquoises, the gift of the Hon. Alick De Vere. He had written a little note at the same time, begging her not to take the trouble to acknowledge so trifling a present, and Ada Courteney had understood better than the Ada Jerninghame of sixteen had done, and she had sent no thanks for his present—but begging her also believe, that, were she ever in any need or difficulty she would find no truer friend than Alick De Vere ; though he added, “it may sound a strange time to choose for saying so, when you are just taking to yourself a friend and protector for life, yet my experience of life, which is greater than yours, leads me not to think it such an inappropriate time as it may at first sight appear,” and though she was barely a bride when she got that note, Ada Courteney perfectly understood him, and now as she sat looking at his gift, and thinking of that old time in the Devonshire lane, the recollection of his note came back to her, but she laughed

to herself as the idea of appealing to Alick De Vere presented itself to her, and she remembered the tall proud, red-haired, Mrs. De Vere, whom she had once come across in a railway journey, and then, though with but faint hopes, even if she had any at all, she despatched her note to Major O'Connor.

That gallant Irishman was very much at a loss when he received it; but the pathetic little note touched his heart, and following his first impulse, he bravely hurried to the rescue of the unhappy beauty, who threw herself upon his mercy, and quickly presented himself in the small sitting-room of those Southsea lodgings. But the hot-hearted Captain found himself in a position as embarrassing as flattering, when the beautiful Ada threw herself into his arms, sobbing out how he was the only man she had ever loved, and though he had cast her from him, it was to him alone she could appeal for protection, when the man, whom she had chosen for her protector for life, wished also to put her from him.

Professional lady-killer though this red-haired Irishman was, there was still a soft side to his heart, and he felt that he had done Ada Jerninghame a great wrong, and wished he could repair it to Ada Courteney. But at the same time he was not more ready now than then to sacrifice himself, and all his possible chances of a wife with gold more solid than that which might chance to shine in her smiles, or her hair, nor did he see how any sacrifice of himself could now benefit Ada Courteney, as it once might have benefited Ada Jerninghame.

“Faith, then, is it of me your husband is jealous?” said he, becoming more Irish than usual in his confusion of mind, and giving no answer to her loving protestations.

“Of you and of the Count Manfredi,” sobbed Ada, relinquishing the shelter she had sought upon his shoulder, and now sinking into her accustomed seat upon the sofa.

“But he can’t be jealous of two men at once. Charlie’s soft, I know, but he would not be so soft as all that.”

“He is though,” said Ada, between her sobs. “He said he would have nothing more to do with me, unless I promised never to see you—or—or the Count again—and I would not—and now he has gone to look for lodgings for himself, because he would not turn me out of these all at once,” and Mrs. Courteney looked round at the shabby little room with proud, though tearful eyes, for she felt that her husband had been tenderer of her than she deserved, even at the last.

“Well, but, me dear Ada, would it not be better if you had promised,” and Major O’Connor sat down on the sofa beside her, and passed an arm round her waist that the lovingness of the action might make up for the seeming want of love in the words.

Then Ada Courteney dried her eyes, and looked straight in front of her with

that hard scornful expression, which had become so habitual to her, but for all that she did not seek to put his arm away from her. She loved this man, she did not love anyone else in the world, and she had done with being respected; all wish for that she had crushed out of her heart, and so she sat quite still with Major O'Connor's arm round her waist, and said: "Perhaps it would have been better."

"And then," said the Major, in soft cajoling tones, "it's very likely in a little while the poor fellow might have forgotten about it, and we might have met sometimes, now——" and here he stopped. He was a very rash man, but he did not mean to ask Ada to make her home with him, and he did not want to hurt her feelings unnecessarily, so he thought it best to let her imagine the rest of his sentence. "And you don't care, do you, me darling, if you never see that Count Manfredi again," said he after a short pause.

“I care about nothing,” said Mrs. Courteney.

“Ah, dear, but that is a very bad way to be in. Oh, if it was not for the filthy lucre how happy we might yet be, Ada darling!” Then the Major kissed her, and Ada Courteney submitted to the caress, just as she had submitted before, when he had passed his arm round her waist. “But you know I am a poor beggar,” proceeded the Major, “and I am not the man to bring my darling into poverty.”

Then for the first time she moved hastily, as if about to speak, but in a moment she resumed her former stony expression, and sat again looking straight before her, and the Major proceeded. “You see, it is sad it makes me that you should not go on living with Charlie. He can give you a more comfortable home than I could. If he would have it so, you would stay with him, would not you—for my sake, Ada darling?” and again he

kissed her, and her forehead felt very cold, as he touched it with his lips.

“For your sake I would do anything,” said she, in low hoarse tones, “but never to see you again——” and there she broke down.

“But it would not be for ever—trust me, in a short time it will be all right again soon. There now, my darling, do you run upstairs, and bathe your lovely eyes, and leave me here. I’ll put it all right with Charlie, when he comes in. You must come down soon, you know, as you have all the influence with him yet, but don’t let him find us together, that would never do.”

Then the poor misguided woman let her head droop once more upon his shoulder, and sobbed, as if her heart would break; but after a moment or two she regained the mastery over herself, and gathering herself up, she hurried from the room.

Very dispirited and very sad at heart was Charlie Courteney when he wended

his way back to his dingy lodgings ; the time, he had so dreaded, had come at last, and he was to be separated from his wife, and he felt as if it was through his own fault. Why all on a sudden had he been so peremptory with her ? was it not better that she should have visits every day, and all day long, from whomsoever she liked, than that he should be separated from her, never to see her again ? He was in the mood almost to fall at her feet, and entreat her forgiveness ; nevertheless his spirit was again roused within him, when on entering his house he found Major O'Connor already installed in the sitting-room.

This dangerous man among the ladies was also very popular among his brother officers ; his hearty genial manner stood him in good stead with both alike, and now he promptly set to work with it to show poor Charlie Courteney the absurdity of his suspicions, telling him how Mrs. Courteney, finding her husband too angry to listen to her, had sent for him for that

purpose, and how he had been waiting to do so. He did not say anything of his little *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Courteney, and Charlie was too confused, too madly anxious to believe Ada innocent to make any close enquiries, and so Major O'Connor had it all his own way, and victoriously demonstrated how absurd it was for a man to be jealous of his wife's affection for two men at once.

Then Ada came down, and quite coldly and calmly gave the required promise, that neither Major O'Connor nor Count Manfredi should ever be admitted to see her again.

Captain Courteney, in his relief at thinking that after all, he was not to be finally separated from his wife, had almost forgotten all about the promise he had asked for; but the other two did not perceive this, and Ada was ready to promise anything now, and Major O'Connor was almost anxious that there should be no more such trying interviews for him, for

he had had rather a “*mauvais quart d’heure* ;” only if there were to be no more such for him, he was not at all willing that there should be any such either sweet or disagreeable for the Count Manfredi.

Then, at last, he and Ada shook hands, under her husband’s very eyes, taking a final farewell of each other, and Captain Courteney walked downstairs with Major O’Connor, and even so far as into the road with him, and then they also shook hands, but theirs was no final farewell ; they, who never cared to see each other, often met again, for their paths in life lay together. The Irishman shook hands with much dignity, rather as if he were magnanimously forgiving the other his unjust suspicions of him, and Captain Courteney said feebly :

“I know you must think me a fool, O’Connor, a poor jealous fool, but when a fellow has the fortune to have a beauty for his wife, he has a deal to go through

with, men, who are not married, like you, have no idea of. Thank you very much for all you have done for me to-day. I could not have borne it to have been separated from my wife, I should have blown my brains out."

Then he went back to his wife, and Major O'Connor went home to his quarters, feeling as if he had done a good deed, and as if Ada Courteney could no longer reproach him with the evil turn he had done her once long ago in the old days, and he did not reproach himself with having played a traitor's part to that poor weak fool, Charlie Courteney, but accepted his thanks quietly, glowing with a sort of pride the while, as he thought of all the proofs of love the other's beautiful wife had showered upon him that afternoon.

But now it was all over, all that entanglement, and he must let no more grass grow under his feet, before finding out the heiress upon whom it would best suit him to expend his arts of fascination.

Thus did it come to pass, that when Count Manfredi next went over to Southsea, he found Captain Courteney's door shut against him, and understood that henceforward it would always be so, and that he must now seek some other less direct means of intercourse with the beautiful Ada. *Eh bien!* he was in no hurry, not having quite matured his other little schemes as yet, and he considered this shutting out of himself as rather a favourable sign than otherwise. Captain Courteney must have become rather desperate in his jealousy to resort to such a measure, and from that he argued there was the more likelihood of Mrs. Courteney's soon becoming desperate also.

He did not know all that had passed within those shabby lodgings, or he would have felt more certain yet of it, though perhaps it would have made him care less about the fulfilment of his plans. For Count Manfredi did not only wish to carry off Ada Courteney to his Italian palace, he

wished also to win that love from her, which another had won from that Rosa of his early days, of whom she so much reminded him, and had he known all about that interview between Major O'Connor and Ada Courteney, he would have despaired of ever winning love from her, such love as Rosa had given to Charlie Beaumont, for all love of that kind Ada had already given away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHEQUE.

“HERE is an invitation for you, Sandy,” said Kathleen, “to Lady Long’s ball. She sent it here, and as we have been expecting you every day, we never sent it to Portsmouth.”

“Oh, thanks. What night is it? Thursday! I hope I shall be able to get leave, Friday would have suited me best, though. Well, how have you been amusing yourself, since I saw you last? Not pining for me, that is easy to see.”

“Oh, it has been awfully slow—nothing going on, and such a mob on the pier, there has been no going there at all.”

“Have you been yachting then?”

“No, not since that wretched day in the Flora. I never was so miserable in my life.”

“*Qu’alliez vous faire* in that *galère* then? What is it the French say?”

“Oh, never mind what the French say, Sandy, I want you to help me.”

“With all the pleasure in life,” he exclaimed with a wonderful access of energy.

“But you must promise not to be angry with me then, nor scold me?”

“Do I ever scold you, *ma belle*?”

“Yes, indeed you do, you dear old boy, and you know you were frightfully angry with me about the Flora. Why did not you stay to dinner that night, silly boy? But now to-day you really must not be angry with me. There—do you see that cheque? I want you to get it cashed for me.”

“Not much trouble in that—not forged I suppose, well, what is the next thing?”

“Oh, that is all.” Kathleen had seemed much embarrassed at first, but she had produced the cheque in such an off-hand manner, and now seemed so indifferent about it, that Sandy could hardly believe it was that she had been so anxious about. Now, however, he took it up, and looked at it. His eyes opened wide with surprise at the first glance, then he gave his cousin a grave searching look :

“For Heaven’s sake, Kathleen, what is the meaning of that?” said he throwing down the cheque as he spoke.

“I don’t know, Sandy, I am sure. I don’t understand anything now. All the world seems at cross purposes. Lord Faversham wanted to give it to me—I can’t think how he ever came to think I was hard up—and he was going away, and you know you yourself told me to be kind to him, and why should I vex him in this, when he was so bent upon it?”

She spoke in a confused pathetic tone, with large tears forming slowly in each of

the large blue eyes, and her cheeks crimson with blushes; but Sandy did not seem to heed her distress. He was sitting at the other side of the round table, at which she had been reading, his arms carelessly resting upon it, now he leant far across the table, trying to see into the face which she averted from him.

“Faversham *gave* it to you, Kathleen?” he said very quietly and distinctly, laying an awful stress upon that one word “gave;” then, as she made no answer, he said after a few moments’ pause: “It was that cheque, I suppose then, he asked me to bring to you, when I saw him off that last morning on the pier?”

She just nodded her head in assent, then burst into tears: “Oh, Sandy, Sandy, you must not be angry with me.”

It had been weighing on her for a long time, this miserable cheque, and often and often had she wished that she had strength of mind enough to throw it into the fire; but then there were those horrid bills—

and where to turn to for money to pay them, she really did not know—if Lady Killowen ever should hear of them—what would happen then, Kathleen had never decided; but the one person she had all her life been afraid of was her mother, and she felt as if she would rather die than that she should hear of her difficulties. Lady Killowen had been particularly violent in her denunciations of extravagance lately, which made Kathleen suspect that she also had horrid debts, which were a trouble to her, so it would be of the less use to apply to her for assistance, and indeed to do so would in any case have been impossible to Kathleen. People must be beginning to know, too, that they were living beyond their means, or they would not be so pressing in their demands, and so it had come about that the cheque had never been put into the fire, but had been kept to meet these demands; only how to make it available? that was the great difficulty. If she gave it to a servant

to cash, she knew the news of it must infallibly come to her mother; as to presenting it herself at the bank, or giving it herself to some shop-keeper, that she could not do.

A hundred times did she blame Lord Faversham for not sending the money to her in gold or notes; true, he had sent double the sum she had at last mentioned to him, and happily he had not put her name upon the cheque, but made it payable to some man or other (she did not know the name) or bearer, but still he had been very inconsiderate, very stupid in sending a cheque at all. Once or twice Kathleen had thought of applying to Sybil; but besides her consciousness that Sybil would have sooner torn up the cheque before her face, than helped her to dispose of it, unless Kathleen invented some story to account for her possession of it; besides this, she knew that Sybil would be equally helpless as herself as to getting it cashed; so then the idea of Sandy occurred to her.

He could help her, and surely he would ; his beautiful cousin knew well enough that he was in love with her, and love is always said to be blind ; he would see no harm in her accepting the cheque, not if she put the whole matter before him, as she thought she so well knew how to do ; but when Sandy said to her in that awful tone : “ Faversham *gave* it to you, Kathleen ? ” she lost all recollection of how she had meant to explain the whole thing to him, and it was worse still, when he went on so quietly to ask if he had been the bearer of that cheque.

Bitterly did she repent ever having allowed it to be sent, bitterly did she repent ever having told him of it ; but now she had done so, and she must put the best face on it that she could, only just at this moment she felt as if she could put no face on it at all, so like many another woman before her, she took refuge in tears.

But Sandy took no notice of her tears :

“For God’s sake, Kathleen, what is the meaning of this cheque? What have you been doing?”

“Doing?” and raising her head, she brushed away the hot tears, and looked him indignantly in the face; then she poured out her version of the story to him, telling it all very much as it really had happened, only giving it a slight colouring by her manner of telling it, ending with, “and then when he was just going away—saying goodbye to me for ever—I had not the heart to refuse him this one—favour as he called it.”

“But when you got the cheque, you might have sent it back to him.”

“I might have, I daresay. I might now. But I tell you, Sandy, I owe as much as this, quite as much,” she might, and with truth, have said more, “and now that I have accepted this cheque, I don’t see that it would do any good to send it back, so I might as well use it, and I thought, Sandy, you would not mind

taking this little trouble for me. But it seems I was mistaken.”

“I should think nothing of doing much more for you—anything that I could, you know that, Kathleen; but if I do not cash it——”

“You mean that you won’t!” and Kathleen rose indignantly from her seat. “Oh, you men! you are all just alike, you would die for our sakes, if it would give us the slightest pleasure, and then if we do but ask the commonest thing——”

“It is no common thing you have asked of me. Many men would not take it as quietly as I have done—that you should receive such a large amount of money from one who is known to have been your lover——”

“Sandy!” and Kathleen looked down upon him, as she stood in front of him, her cheeks ablaze with indignation, her eyes dilated and gleaming with a red gleam for all their blueness. “Do you

dare—there—take it, and tell Lord Faversham what I have done with it—and why,” she added, with a low mocking laugh, so unlike her usual merry ringing peal, that it made Sandy shudder. Then she swept from the room, looking more beautiful than ever in the glory of her offended dignity. “I will never speak to you again,” she said, as she swept out at the door.

She had torn the cheque into little bits before she tossed it to him, and now he sat with the fragments in his hands gazing blankly after her. He had hardly known what he was saying before his cousin had struck him dumb with her indignation, now he loved her for her anger with him. He thought her ten times better and nobler than before, how grand she had been in her anger; she had not paused for a moment, but gone straight from the room when he insulted her. “Good God! to think that he should have insulted her so! he, Sandy Beaumont, her cousin, of all men!” and

how beautiful she had looked as she had swept out of the room. Then he looked at the torn cheque, and for a moment he almost wished it were whole again; but no, he was glad it was torn. It was too degrading to think of Lord Faversham giving his cousin money. Poor fellow! he meant it well, no doubt, and Sandy thought he knew how it had all come about.

He remembered one day De Veux had been going on talking in his foolish fashion, saying how Miss O'Grady must some day marry for money, as De Veux was fond of saying, and talking as to the desirability of his throwing over Helen, and taking his chance. How Sandy hated the fellow! and he remembered how Faversham had said in his *naïf* way, just as if such an idea had never occurred to him before: "That it must be an awfully unpleasant thing to marry anyone one did not really care about." Then Sandy looked again at the torn cheque, and wondered how his cousin

had degraded herself so far as to accept of it, for, that it was degradation, he could not doubt, and she must have felt it so, or she would not have torn the cheque, and thrown it from her. "She must have been hard pressed," he thought, "and now what will she do? oh, if I were but rich!" That wearisome, never ending refrain! to how many different tunes is it sung, I wonder, between the rising and the setting of the sun.

He felt as though he were bound to replace that cheque to her, it was because of him that she had torn it, and she must have stood in great need of it, before she would have deigned to accept of it. But how—how—that was the difficulty. He could not give it to her, never in the whole course of his life was he likely to be able to give it to her. But he might lend it to her for some indefinite time, and she might return it to him, when she were married to some rich man or other. He had accustomed himself to the idea by this time;

he supposed it must happen sooner or later that she should marry some rich man, but his cousin must not be hurried into a marriage that was distasteful to her, through the want of money to satisfy her creditors. A girl could not raise money as a man could; he would get it for her somehow, and make her understand that there was no hurry about repaying him. By selling his commission he might have made it a gift to her, but Sandy did not even think of this.

His profession was the one thing that was left him, his love was to be taken from him, he had resigned himself to that idea, and now the most brilliant prospect his imagination painted for him, was a soldier's death in some far distant land. He pictured to himself the tears she would shed, and could almost hear the tones in which she would praise him. In her words he would indeed shine forth a real hero. Poor Sandy! he knew that he must be dead first to bring all this about, but yet

it was something sweet to think of, that all this might yet come to pass. It was the only sweet thing he yet had to look forward to, and nothing of all this could come to pass but through his profession, so it all drew him the closer to it, and made his soldier's life the dearer to him. He never thought now of giving that up, and he hardly felt as if he risked his commission by borrowing money he knew he could never pay himself but through the sale of it; for he had accepted it as so certain a fact that Kathleen would marry some rich man, and then of course she would repay him. Only now just for her present necessities he felt himself bound to replace that cheque to her.

Then Sandy put the torn fragments in his pocket, they were not to be left about for any idle eye to see. Besides, he meant to enclose them to Lord Faversham, telling him, coldly, though as little unkindly as he could, that his cousin stood in no need of any young Earl's pecuniary assistance.

Kathleen had bidden him write to Lord Faversham, and he meant to do so, of what use had the destruction of the cheque been if he were never to hear of it, but Sandy did not mean to hurt the poor boy's feelings unnecessarily.

Somehow, the report had reached Ryde that he was very ill, that the Baths had had no effect, and but little was expected of the grape cure, and that if he were equal to the journey, he was to spend the following winter in Madeira, to see if that soft balmy air could restore him to health again. If he were equal to the journey—already it had come to that with this Lord Faversham, and “*Aime moi bien, aime moi bien,*” rang in the ears of many of those who heard this report, as if it were the boy Earl's funeral knell. Sandy would write very kindly to him, but tell him he must, that Kathleen did not require the money, and then he would raise it for her somehow. Would she accept it of him? she had quarrelled with him now, and gone

away from him in anger, but she would forgive him soon ; of that Sandy had little doubt. She would soon feel that he had not meant to provoke her that it was but by reason of his love for her that he had done so, and when she felt this, she would be too generous not to own it. Then when they were friends again, it would not be difficult to persuade her to accept the money ; she must have been hard pressed to accept it from Lord Faversham, she could hardly hesitate now to take it from her cousin as a loan, and its being such would remove any scruples she might otherwise have had on the score of his poverty.

So Sandy took up his hat and went out quietly that Lady Killowen might not hear him, for he was in no mood for a bantering talk with his aunt. He would come back when he had written to Lord Faversham, and raised the money for Kathleen. But this last he would do first ; it was an empty quibble, he knew,

and he was astonished at himself for minding about it, but he could not bring himself to write that his cousin had no need of the money, until he had got it for her. Only when he had got it, did he feel as if he could write this without any scruples, and yet he knew this was but a quibble, and was astonished at himself for caring about it. But he did care about it, and was determined to get the money first, so now he had to consider how this was to be done. No one has far to go in these days to look for a money-lender, but it was not any money-lender that would suit Sandy just then.

He had borrowed money at high interest before now, and he knew what it was to do so. True, the last Derby had set him right, but it was hardly likely the next year's Derby would have an equally beneficial effect, and besides after that last Derby, in the first glow of relief at shaking off the burden of his debts, he had made a sort of vow as a thanksgiving

offering, that for the future he would abstain from all gambling, not from all playing at games of chance for money, but from all playing for such stakes as he had not got it in his power to lose. It would not do after that to trust to the next year's Derby to set him right again; so it was just in the very nick of time when he came across Major De Lancey. This officer was a sort of Nestor in the regiment, not through his superior age, but through his superior wisdom, and many a young subaltern had he helped through a serious difficulty, and saved his commission for before now; so that directly he saw him, it seemed to Sandy the most natural thing in the world to go up to him, and tell him he was in a difficulty, and wanted to ask his advice.

“Sorry for it,” said Major De Lancey. “Come up to my room after mess, and I’ll see if I can help you. Just now I’m in a hurry to get to a kettle-drum at Lady Clanmore’s, that I’ve somehow let myself

in for. But I'll be at your service this evening."

"Well, what is it, Beaumont?" said Major De Lancey that evening, when Sandy had come up to his room, and he had provided him with a cigar, and made him generally comfortable. "What scrape are you in now?"

"Not in, any just now, thank you, Major. But I want some money."

"So I supposed. You've been playing again," said Major De Lancey, with a look of displeasure, for on the occasion of that last Derby's success, he had given Sandy Beaumont some good advice, which the latter had promised to follow.

"I gave you my word that I would not," said Sandy, puffing away at his cigar.

"True. I beg your pardon, but for what then do you want money?"

"That is my secret," said Sandy. "But it is for nothing bad, nor is it for myself that I want it, and I must get it. I think you would say so yourself, if you

knew the whole story; only that I cannot tell you."

"Neither do I care to hear it. If you tell me it is for nothing bad, and that you are bound to get it, I would as soon take your opinion as my own. How much is it?" Then when Sandy had told how much he wanted, Major De Lancey thought for a moment. "When will you ever be able to repay it, Beaumont?"

"I don't know when, but I know I shall be able to some day."

"Well, as it happens, I can let you have it myself. Pay me when it is convenient to you. Only, Beaumont, you have promised me one thing, now promise me another; if you want any more money, come to me for it, do not go to a money-lender. I might not be able to lend it to you myself again, but promise me you will come to me first."

"I promise," said Sandy, shaking the other by the hand, as he spoke, "and thank you a thousand times.

You are the very best fellow I ever came across."

"Not at all," said the other. "I should not lend you the money, but that I know I shall see it back again. I never wish for a better security than your word."

Sandy's colour rose high; there were not many subalterns to whom Major De Lancey would have spoken in such terms. "You will certainly see it back again, but it may be some time first, so about the interest——"

"I have lent money before now, and I have never received any interest for it. It is too late for me to enter upon the career of an usurer now," said Major De Lancey.

"I beg your pardon, sir; but indeed you are too kind. You are the best friend I ever had, and I only hope we may go under fire together some day."

The elder officer smiled. "What, wishing for foreign service! you used

to threaten to exchange if we were ordered abroad."

"I used to," said Sandy, "but I am tired of England now," and he looked steadily into the other's face, as if daring him to see more in this change of feeling than the simple reason he gave for it. But Major De Lancey seemed to accept this explanation :

"Well, if we do go under fire again, I hope it may be side by side. But I know more of it than you do, and I should be just as glad if the 168th had no more fighting to do. I am sorry to turn you out, Beaumont, but I have some letters I must write to-night, and it is getting late."

When Sandy had left him, and as Major De Lancey settled down to his letters, he could not help a slight wonder as to what the other wanted this money for.

"Not for himself," he said, "and yet he could hardly want it to lend to some friend, he spoke so confidently of its being returned; besides, why should not his

friend come to me himself? Depend upon it there's a woman in the case," said he, as men so often do, when there is anything they cannot otherwise account for. "I wonder, is it anything to do with Lady Killowen? she was said to be left badly off, and she is an extravagant woman, I should say, if there ever was one. That wish for active service too! There must be something wrong between him and his cousin. I've noticed he has been looking rather down in the mouth lately. Well if Miss O'Grady prefers that Italian Count to young Beaumont, it only shows she is not worthy of him, that is all. Indeed, there are not many girls that are, he is the finest young fellow we have out and out, and as to her she is a flirt of the first water. I wonder he does not see it himself."

Then Major De Lancey buried himself in his letters.

CHAPTER XIV.

RYDE PIER. INTERLUDE.

IT was a glorious sunny Saturday afternoon, and Ryde Pier was crowded, for not only was all the Ryde world there, but half Portsmouth as well. Already there was but little room for peacocking, and not a seat to be had anywhere, and still there was a crowd on the deck of the Portsmouth boat, in which Sandy Beaumont came across with Major De Lancey and a few others of the 168th.

. It was a motley scene which presented itself to them on landing ; in the foreground were the porters struggling backwards and forwards beneath heavy boxes through the motley crowd, that always grows slightly

thicker round a newly arrived steamer ; then there were the scared looking people in travelling dress, who were making their way towards the back of the island, and who, between the porters and their boxes, and the gay loungers with their trailing skirts, and the band doing full justice to a selection from *Fra Diavolo* on one side of them, and the steamer blowing off steam behind them,—oh ! those hateful steamers !—seemed hardly to know which way to turn ; then there were all the vain and obstinate peacocks, who would try to peacock it, though they must have seen that there was clearly no room for anything of the kind, and behind them, and all round them were those sensible and fortunate peacocks, who had secured seats for themselves on the long narrow benches, and were there enjoying the pleasures of *far niente*, or carrying on the one business of their butterfly lives, all as it might happen.

Major De Lancey cleared himself from

the steamer throng, and then standing still, reviewed the scene with the air of a connoisseur, and Sandy stood behind him and did not review the scene at all, but only looked out for Kathleen. There were the Miss Vivyens of course, struggling up and down; Colonel Beauchamp in devoted attendance upon the eldest, while Grace was smiling destruction upon a tall man from Aldershot, with face cleanly shorn in the fashion of to-day, but for a long yellow moustache with a languid droop in it. The poor swell must have been annihilated at once, but that a Charybdis saved him from the Scylla of Grace Vivyen's smiles; they could but do half their work, whilst he had to labour after her, growing hot and red in the difficulties of pilotage, as he felt himself always within less than an inch of treading upon his fair charmer's train, or, yet more fatal, being precipitated upon her, tripped up by that of some other heedless fair one.

There too among the walking ladies is

Miss Smith ; that yellow cloud, she calls her hair, has not quite fluttered away yet. Is it anxiety, lest it should do so, that paints her cheek that brilliant pink ? rouge ! tight lacing ! Nay, nay, how ill-natured the world is ; both would not be needed to account for it, and who can tell about the lacing without seeing the waist, or discern rouge through a veil so artfully spotted ? That was a laugh ; no mistake about that ; again too ! the true professional ring in it. No wonder ; those two sisters are actresses. How daintily they've mounted up their yellow hair behind those almost invisible bonnets, and how jauntily the taller one leans against the railing, as four or five of the Portsmouth garrison chaff, or are chaffed by her. You should see her act the part of a dashing young officer, as she did only last night at the tiny Ryde theatre ; she swaggers about then with a more thoroughly military air than anyone of those men now paying their court to her, and the way she twirls her moustache ! it

is downright murder. That pale little thing with the dovelike air and slightly vacant expression is her sister; she is dressed with sweet simplicity all in white, but she is not the bride of that tall dashing black-whiskered man, on whose arm she is always leaning so confidently. He is in some swell cavalry regiment, and is just at present on leave, and he don't exactly think himself suited for matrimony, but all the same a pretty actress is a very pleasant toy.

Enough though of this sort of thing. Major De Lancey took it all in much more quickly than I have described it, and he saw a lot more things besides. He saw Mrs. Courteney doing penance in a shabby black silk dress by the side of her husband, and Major O'Connor glancing unutterable things from a convenient resting place on the railing, and Miss Zieri on those terrible little heels looking as lively as ever by the side of her mother, whilst two burly looking yachting men cleared a passage for

them, and a tall slight young man with a foreign air walking close behind the two ladies, made himself yet more useful by amusing them; all thanks to the "short-and-sweets" they wore, or he would have had to keep his distance. He was to take Holy Orders shortly, and intended having the last dance of his life next Thursday at Lady Long's, as he told the two ladies, at the same time describing to them all the other deprivations he would be called upon to undergo, when he became one of the priesthood. Such a waltzer, and such a handsome young man, it was sad to think he should be so cut short in his career, and so the ladies said, and he tried to console them by promising to come down to Ryde to preach his very first sermon.

"But we go to Homburg next week," said Miss Zieri, and in the delights of this idea for the moment forgot the sacrifice this charming young man was about to make of himself.

Major De Lancey took due note of all

this, and got a little nod from Miss Zieri as she passed; but Sandy saw nothing, for he had caught a glimpse of a black velvet dress sitting down on the other side of the band, and felt sure it belonged to his cousin. Now having reconnoitred sufficiently, he and his friend advanced from their post of observation, and then whilst Major De Lancey did the agreeable to Lady Killowen, Sandy longed to make friends again with Kathleen; but she greeted him very coolly, and the Count was talking to her, and he successfully prevented her cousin from edging in a word, every now and then glancing at him in a manner expressive of his determination not to let him do so; till the latter grew hot with anger, and at last went away discomfited, and sought comfort from Sybil Mordaunt, whose large sad eyes and gentle voice had a charm for him, independent of her being his beautiful cousin's chosen friend. And so the game of cross purposes was played on on Ryde Pier almost

more busily than usual all that sunshiny Saturday afternoon.

But that evening, Sandy did make his peace with his cousin. Lady Killowen asked him to dinner and Major De Lancey also, and she did not invite the Count, and after dinner they all went down the pier, and there in the cool quiet starlight Sandy made his cousin accept the loan of the money, which he had procured to replace the cheque he had provoked her into tearing, and Kathleen accepted it very readily and carelessly. She graciously permitted Sandy to do her this service, and she frankly forgave him for all that he had said the other day, and she did not seem much to care in what terms he had written to Lord Faversham.

“You took care not to hurt his feelings, poor boy, I hope,” she said; and then she turned off to another subject, and it never seemed to occur to her to ask how Sandy had got this money that he was lending to her, or any other questions about it,

and Sandy thought as he had often thought before that hers was a very strange character, and he tried to decide to which of the many noble and beautiful qualities he so much loved in her, this apparent strangeness was owing. But Sandy was not good at this kind of thing, and he came to no decision.

CHAPTER XV.

LADY LONG'S DANCE, AND THE SCANDAL AT IT.

LADY LONG's dances were always very exclusive affairs; this year she gave one on the night after the first day of the town Regatta, and the aristocracy there wiped out the recollection of the vulgarities they had been mixed up with during the day; the tub races, and the duck hunt, when that vile duck had worn a chignon bigger than two heads put together, topped by a flying night-cap, and had actually brushed his dripping garments against the dainty Morgan built suit of one of the few members of the peerage Ryde delights in doing homage to; and worst of all, because most

generally exciting, the pole dance or pig hunt, as the English strangers called it, with its greasy pole, and many ignominious tumbles into the water, finishing this day, as it so often does, with a yet more ignominious winning of the pig, when one shivering wretch crept on hands and knees along the pole, and succeeded in freeing the unhappy prize before following those who went before him into the briny, and the pig squeaking dolefully, as it struggled to swim, was nearly torn asunder ; while four or five men contended with each other which should push it into a boat and carry it off to *terra firma*, and the rabble of Ryde having for once in a way taken possession of the pier (generally held sacred from it by that blessed two-penny preliminary to passing the gates) hissed and huzzaed alternately.

It had been a shocking noisy jostling mob certainly, and even those who had made a dignified retreat into boats, and contemplated the scene from them, felt

that they had hardly been at a safe distance from the general vulgarity, and were relieved to find themselves in Lady Long's dignified well-lighted rooms.

And now, much pleasure though it would give me to do so, I will not describe where Lady Long's house was situated, nor what her rooms were like, nor whether her boards went crossways, or were slippery as glass, or covered with matting; for I wish in no ways that anyone skimming these pages should be able to fix on any one of the notabilities of Ryde as represented by her ladyship. Believe me, she is not any of the notabilities reigning in this year of grace, when you have the good fortune to come into the "pleasant places" of the Isle of Wight; but she was one of the notabilities and a very leading one too in that year when Kathleen O'Grady was the beauty of Ryde, and no one disputed the palm with her. There has not been such another year before or since. In that year, Lady Long and

Miss Long and even Teddy Long were very important people, and if they have passed away since, leaving no traces behind them, other great people have done the same. "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair," said Ozymandias, King of Kings ; his works are gone, and here our knowledge of him ends. I could tell you much more of Lady Long and her son and her daughter, though they too have left no works behind them to tell of their past importance.

Their house was one of the best houses in Ryde ; they could not have been such great people there otherwise ; they had many rooms opening into one another, which they threw open to their guests on the occasion of their giving a dance, and one or two of the rooms opened out on to a terrace running along one side of the house ; beyond the terrace lay the garden, and on the night of this particular dance it was so fine and sultry that the windows were all thrown open, inviting those, who

cared to do so, to wander out and enjoy themselves *al fresco*.

It was a very spirited dance ; Lady Long understood this sort of thing. She had always enough men, and the right sort of men, a more difficult matter this than the former, and she had always the right sort of young ladies, not quite so many of them though as of the men ; and at these dances Teddy Long, who was generally rather by way of frustrating all his mother's well-designed little plans, was useful to her, and being perfectly good-humoured himself, did his little best towards making other people so. He was indeed so very good-humoured that night, that he consented to dance one purely duty-dance—and actually opened the ball with a Countess, while his sister honoured Mr. Simpson with her hand.

The Longs had lately altered their tactics as regarded that gentleman, and were said to be trying very hard to catch Mr. Simpson in those days, and unkind people said

Lady Long had in so many words told him to ask her daughter for that dance; anyhow he did so. Kathleen had long ago promised the very first dance to Sandy, and she kept her promise; and Miss Zieri danced with that handsome young man, who was taking his last draught of the world's cup of pleasure, and Major De Lancey and Mr. De Veux danced with the two Miss Gordons; and Major O'Connor stood up against the wall and looked killing, as he reviewed the young ladies preparatory to asking any of them to dance. Mrs. Courteney, of course, was not invited, nor were the Vivyens, which was really very hard, especially as Colonel Beauchamp was; however he had the good feeling not to go, and the Count Manfredi did not arrive till later.

So the ball opened merrily enough, and there was no want of anything, unless, perhaps, that one want, which hosts and hostesses do not seem to consider it a part of their duty to supply—that want of

something to talk about. But after a certain period that want was less felt, for a rumour flew about the room, at first just whispered as if the teller was slightly ashamed of it, but soon talked of out loud by all sorts of people in all sorts of combinations without any respect of persons. Report told how the Italian Count and Miss O'Grady had been seen sitting together in a quiet nook at the bottom of the garden far away from the house.

“Oh, by Jove, yes,” said Teddy Long, “I had it from the fellow who saw it. He had his arm round her waist, and then he kissed her. Well, why not? very nice I should say. They had been sitting out ever so long by one of the windows, and then they wandered down the garden. They're there now, if you want to look after them. I say, come down there with me, won't you?” he said, to a fair little thing, with soft curling hair, and a sweet expression, whom just before he had been

declaring to be "the dearest little girl in the world."

"Hang it, you won't. Dance this dance with me then; it is our's, isn't it?" and he carried off the little fair girl, proceeding to dilate to her on all the charms of the situation in which Kathleen and the Count must now find themselves.

"Very jolly, I should think," said a rosy young naval lieutenant to the eldest Miss Gordon, as he tried to conduct her to a luxurious ottoman of seductive appearance, but as yet not very attainable through the intervening crowd.

"I shouldn't like kissing the Count," said the young lady, coolly. "Think of his moustache!" She was wrapping her light tulle draperies round her, trying to save them from the feet of the crowd; for she had a praiseworthy regard for her dress, and was much concerned about it, so she spoke as if she would not otherwise much object to kissing the Count.

"I should not care for *that* either," said

the lieutenant, with a by no means unaffectionate glance into his partner's face. His rosy cheeks and pretty dimples did not prevent his being a flirt of the fast and furious order. "You think the moustache would be in the way?" and whether intentionally or not, he raised a no longer white-gloved hand to the lips his service regulations kept clear from any such annoyance.

"I hope it won't scratch her," continued the young lady, with equal coolness. "But it looks so hard." She was still wrapt up in protecting her dress, and sublimely unconscious of her partner's meaning. "She is so beautiful, is she not?" she went on with more animation, having now escaped the crowd. "Why there she is—where is the Count?"

And there sure enough was Miss O'Grady looking perfectly at her ease, only perhaps a little bored, as she lent on Mr. Simpson's arm, and tried to smile at his rather heavy pleasantries; and the Count Manfredi was

also visible now whirling round the room at a prodigious pace with Miss Long, who certainly made a good partner for a dance, whatever she might be for the more lasting relationships of life. But seeing the two actors in the little scene that every one had been talking and wondering about, did not make the subject less interesting, and for the rest of the evening they could not speak or look at each other—and they did so many times—without its being abundantly commented on.

“I suppose it will be announced to-morrow,” said Mrs. Gordon to Lady Long, “they’ve been engaged for some time now, I fancy. It is only a pity they were so thoughtless to-night.”

“Miss O’Grady means to have him,” said Lady Long venomously. “I rather wonder that Lady Killowen should think him worth so much encouragement; it is only a foreign title after all. Are we to wish your cousin joy, Mr. Beaumont?” said she, speaking louder, and turning a

little aside to Sandy, who had been leaning up against the wall for some time.

"I don't know any reason for doing so," said he, not moving from his place, but looking rather pale as he spoke.

"Perhaps you think she might do better for herself; but she does not seem to think so," said Lady Long, piqued by his holding so aloof from her, when she deigned to speak to him.

"I am afraid I don't understand you," said Sandy, growing as red as he had been pale before.

"Well, certainly she is a very pretty girl, and it is a pity she should marry a foreigner. I quite understand your not liking it at first very much. But you need not be so very bent on keeping the secret, when it must be all known to-morrow. When I have anything I don't want anyone to know, I shall certainly tell you, Mr. Beaumont. It will be far safer with you than with me," and Lady Long, the most reticent of women, where it suited

her purposes, moved on to see after her other guests.

Sandy looked after her, then he glanced at Mrs. Gordon with an expression that seemed to say: "*Et tu Brute!* I should have thought it of her, but I did not expect it of you," and then he turned aside to Major O'Connor, who was also doing wall-flower as that gallant officer was indeed very fond of doing.

"She is a darling creature, is Miss O'Grady," was the Major saying to a friend also standing in the doorway, "but he'd prefer poor Mrs. Courteney, if she would have him. I'd bet you two to one, only we'll never know, Charlie is such a devil for looking after her now."

"The deuce he is; not that he will ever stop her seeing whom she likes though. But to think of that Count's kissing Miss O'Grady in the garden! now if it had been Mrs. Courteney I should not wonder—"

Sandy brushed past the two men some-

what rudely, objecting, as he did so, to their blocking up the door-way.

“Faith, it’s her cousin, he’ll have been hearing what we said, and he is clean mad for love of her, they say,” said Major O’Connor.

“No, poor devil, is he?” replied the other. “Well he has not got the ghost of a chance,” and he laughed.

It was true, too true, that the Count had kissed Kathleen in the garden, as report had said; such reports are true sometimes, though very often they are not. He had kissed her, and she had not objected, nor insisted on coming straight back to the house, when he did so, but had remained alone with him in the moon-light, for some little while longer, and in that little while longer he had not offered to her. He had talked of the delicious days at Rome, and the happiness he was now enjoying at Ryde, but he did not offer to her, and Kathleen had been born in the nineteenth century, and knew

what was what, as well as most girls, and she noticed this omission on his part; and all his loving words and looks, even while his arm was round her waist, did not quite drive away a horrid fear that he was trifling with her. Yet how could it be possible, that it should be so? that anyone should dare to trifle with the Honourable Kathleen O'Grady, who had been presented, and gone out in London, and been a beauty even there? It was absurd to think anyone could trifle with her, and yet—and yet— She supposed he considered that he had offered to her, and that it was in this delicate manner Italians managed such things, and not in the point blank English fashion; but all the same she would have been very glad if the Count had been English just in this one thing, and had offered in the point blank English fashion.

It was very hard to make talk to that heavy brute of a man Mr. Simpson, or to that insufferable puppy De Veux, and not

to be certain whether she was the fiancée of the Count Manfredi, or still a young lady on her promotion, bound dutifully to submit her charms for their inspection. She had great powers of persuasion over other people, and she would not have had these, if she had not had great powers of persuasion over herself; but whilst she was actually in the same room with the Count, there was something that made it impossible for her to convince herself that she and he were engaged to each other. When she got home, it was quite different; there as she undressed by herself, having dismissed the sleepy maid, as soon as she had unfastened her dress for her, she was free to picture their interview to herself as she chose, and first she wondered that she had ever had any doubts, and next she forgot that she had had any. And so she thought her dream had come true, and she was now engaged to the Count Manfredi, and Kathleen remembered that evening after Major De Lancey had talked

to her on the pier of him and of Mrs. Courteney, and how she had vowed to herself that she would never leave off loving him.

“Why did I ever doubt him?” she asked herself. “He has been just the same all along. Only just after poor papa’s death, he did not care to speak to me in this way. Foreigners, as they go into mourning for such a short time, go into very deep mourning, and they don’t do anything at all then, and so he didn’t think it was fitting. Now he has followed me to England, and he is always just the same. He has never offered in so many words, because he thinks it would be absurd. He thinks I have always understood him, just as he has always understood me.” Then Kathleen sighed; whether she understood him or not, he certainly must understand her now.



Sept 12/68

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